There are stranger things than you...
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There Are Stranger Things Than You, Bad Wolf by BadWolfeRose

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Summary: The Doctor had taken the Ponds to visit a small town in the 80s, at Amy's request. He didn't expect to get involved in the case of a dead kid whose mother thought he was still alive. Nor did he expect to see a message for him in lights. Just two simple words: Bad Wolf. (Eleventh Doctor/Rose reunion)

1. Chapter 1

Chapter 1: A Name in Lights

(A/N: My first fanfic. So please be a *teensy* bit forgiving if I make mistakes. I'm continuity error-prone. Just so you know, this is set after series 5 in Doctor Who but before series 6. And in Stranger Things, this is set after Holly, Jolly but before The Body. Or at least before any big plot points take place. So morning of The Body episode. And both shows will go off-canon one way or another.)

Disclaimer: I do not own Doctor Who and/or Stranger Things. If I did, I'd be rich and this would've actually happened.

Amy. Amelia Pond, his absolutely mad wife. She had gotten them involved in this mess. After all, she was the one who had wanted to visit a small town in the 1980s for some strange reason. Something about nostalgia. So, naturally, the TARDIS had taken them to the *one* small town in 1983 with a missing kid. Well, his body was found, but they'd heard people talk about how his mother still believed he was alive. So the Doctor had decided they'd best check it out. *He's calling himself Doctor John Smith. Rather ridiculous if you ask me.*

And right now they're standing in the living room of a woman Rory thinks might be mental. After all, there's Christmas lights *everywhere*, and it's only November. And they'd found her son's *body.* How could he be *alive?* Just what were they caught up in *now?*

The Doctor had a different opinion of Joyce Byers, however. He'd seen so many weird and wonderful things that this somewhat paled in comparison. The unique thing about this, though, was her cleverness. After all, she'd figured out a way to communicate with… whoever/whatever this person/thing was.

"So, Joyce, when did this start?"

"Not too long after Will disappeared. The…the phone rang. It was just breathing, but it…it sounded like him. Then something made the

phone break. Electricity came out of it."
"The phone short-circuited?"

"If that's the word for it, yeah. So I got a new phone, and…it happened again. That time it was his voice. He was trying to talk to me. And I heard this…noise, in the background. It was, I don't know…some kind of animal. This, this *growling*. He was in danger, I just knew it. And then it…short-circuited again."

"Did anything else happen after that?"

"Yes. The stereo in Will's room started playing *by itself*. And then…" Joyce paused, took a deep breath. "I saw something…come out of the wall. It was almost human, but it wasn't. It had really long arms, and…it didn't…it didn't have a face."

"It didn't have a face?" The Doctor repeats her question calmly.

"No. Look, I know it's weird, and I know it sounds crazy. I know *I* sound crazy! But I know what I saw and what I heard. I just know that Will is *here*. He *told* me he's here! And that he's in danger."

"With that alphabet on the wall?"

"Uh huh. I asked him where he was and he spelled out 'RIGHT HERE'. When I asked how to find him he told me to run and the thing came out of the wall again. Please, I'm telling the truth! I *know* he's alive."

The Doctor gently placed his hand on her shoulder. "It's weird, but I reckon I've seen weirder." He gave her a tiny smile. "Trust me, there are stranger things. I believe you."

"Thank you..." Her voice trails off as she pulls the Doctor into a hug. "Sorry, I'm just…very grateful. Nobody else will believe me, not even my older son."

"It's fine," he says with a grin.

He really sympathized with this woman. After all, he knew what it was like having someone you cared about cruelly ripped away from you.
Oh, come off it! That was three hundred years ago! His mind nagged

him. *She's got to be dead by now, so it'll do you no good moping about her. You have to forget.*
But, try as he might, the Doctor knew he'd never forget Rose Tyler.

Her voice stopped his thoughts. "Um, Doctor Smith, sir? Are you alright?"

"I'm always alright, Ms. Byers. Just do that a lot. Get lost in my head, I mean. But I'm fine." He practically grimaces, claps his hands together.
"Now, perhaps you could go get another phone? How much are those things? I'll give you some money for it."

"No, you don't have to do that. But getting another phone is a good idea," she agreed.

"I insist. So how much is a phone?"

"Uh, about $20."

While Joyce was gone getting her phone, Amy's thick Scottish accent broke the silence. "You were very nice to her."
"I try. Besides, I'm pretty sure I know what this is, but we have to wait for a phone call, or for the lights to flash, or something. Then I can scan it to make sure."
"Of course *you* know. Still…that was very kind, what you did."

"She's been told by everyone that she's crazy. I think she deserves to be heard out. And as far as giving her money goes, I noticed she doesn't wear a wedding ring, so she's probably a widow. Or divorced. With two boys, mind you. I reckon she probably spent a fortune on all these lights, too. I mean, nobody keeps *this* many lights in their attic, so I assumed she bought more. Even if none of my assumptions are correct-though they usually are-"

"Doctor?"

"I was talking, Pond. As I was saying, even if my assumptions are incorrect, I figured she'd appreciate it. Now, I'm going to scan for-"

"Raggedy Man! The lights!"

All the nearby Christmas lights have started flashing. The Doctor is the first to speak. "Okay, Ponds. Stay calm and let me do the talking."

Not speaking to anyone in particular, the Doctor calls out, "Okay, if you can hear me, make that cluster of lights over there flash." He points to the tangled ball of lights Joyce had used to speak to Will- once for yes, two for no.
The cluster flashes. "Good, so you can hear me. We'll talk, then. So, blink the cluster of lights once for yes, twice for no. Spell out words with this over here-"he points to the alphabet on the wall. "-and if you want, you can flash all the lights for spaces. Do you understand?"

The cluster of lights flashes once. "Great. Now, first question: Am I speaking to Will Byers?"
It flashes twice this time. "No? Alright then. Do you know who that is?" Another single flash. "That's good. Now, do you know where he is?" Another yes. "Even better. Now, I realize I should've asked this already, but…is he alive?"

A single flash once again. "Alright, that's a relief. Now, I'll try to find you, whoever you are. But I have one more question. Pardon my manners for not asking earlier, I got sidetracked. To whom am I speaking? Can you spell out your name for me?"

Slowly, letter by letter, the alphabet on the wall spells out a name the Doctor thought he'd never see or hear again.

ROSE TYLER

(A/N: So, what'd you think? Strong starting point? Did I leave you wanting at least a little more? Let me know in a review!)

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2: Wolf's Message

(Disclaimer: I own nothing but my screwy imagination.)

The Doctor simply stood there, all the breath gone from his body. "Rose? Rose *Tyler?*"

The lights responded with another message, one that made the Doctor's hearts clench in anguish. A simple question, but a heartbreaking one.

Who are you?

He sighed, the pain in his voice becoming slightly evident. "Rose, it's me. The Doctor. I…I regenerated. Can you…can you see me?"

A no.

I can only hear you, the lights spelled out.

"Rose, how did you get here?"

Trapped while trying to cross universes, came her reply.

"I'm going to rescue you, alright? You and Will. Just…answer me this. Why were you trying to cross universes?" He got a simple yet complex answer.

Outlived everyone. I cannot die.

"But…you're human! How…"

Her response is two words. Two ancient, terrifying words he hadn't heard since he last spoke her name.

Bad Wolf.

He said nothing in reply, numb with shock. This made Rose attempt

to get his attention.

Doctor?

"I'm here, Rose. Just…surprised. I thought Bad Wolf was gone."

All the lights began flashing simultaneously. All three of the people in the room were now confused. Until the Doctor realized why it was happening. It was Rose's way of expressing an emotion. He could only describe it as pure *joy*.
Then he got another message in the lights, and he could almost hear her say it in that somewhat teasing tone of hers.

Found you.

He grins. "Yes, Rose. Yes you did." He had taken the time to scan the room with his sonic screwdriver while the lights were flashing. "Rose, you're in what's called a pocket universe. It's like this one, but different, in a dark way. The creature that lives in it is a type of alien that creates pocket universes to live and hunt in. How, I have no idea. Usually they leave you alone, but *unfortunately* something must have happened that allowed it to cross into this universe. And now it's hunting here too. So please, be careful. And my scan's telling me that this mini-rift we're using to talk is about to close. So if you have anything else you want to tell me, you better tell me now."

She spells out a brief message, and it hits him like a dagger in the heart. Then all the lights in the house flash rapidly before shutting off.

He's still numb from her final words, and it takes Amy's voice to snap him back to reality. "Want to explain that, Raggedy Man?" Although her question was somewhat rude in wording, her tone is kind. And after all, who *wouldn't* have questions after Rose's last message to him?

I love you.

He sighs, his eyes becoming downcast. "Long story, Pond. I'd…rather not talk about it right now. Same goes for you, Rory."

She wants to press for answers, but the look Rory gives her holds

Amy back. "Alright. I won't mention it until you do." He gives her a hint of a smile. "Thanks, Pond."

He opens his mouth to say something further, but is cut off by the sound of the back door opening. "Sorry it took me so long, but I got the…phone."

Joyce Byers walked into her living room to find the three strangers looking absolutely devastated. Especially one of them in particular. "Are you three alright? Did something happen?"

The Doctor spoke up first. "I spoke to someone, but it wasn't Will. She said he was alright, though. She knows where he is."

Joyce looked very relieved. "So where is he?" Her face fell again. "But this must mean…someone else is missing too. Do you know who it is? You said 'she'. Is a woman missing from here?"

He closes his eyes. "Not…not from here, no. She's not from anywhere near here."

"How do you know?"

"Because I know her. She told me her name, and I realized I knew her."

Joyce's expression changes to one of sympathy. "Oh my God. I'm so sorry. Is she okay?"

He smiles just a bit then. "She will be. I'm going to rescue both of them. Besides, I know Rose is capable of taking care of herself. And something tells me she's taking care of Will, too. She's that kind of person; always helping those who need it."

"So Rose…knows where Will is? And they're in the same place?"

He nods.

"Where exactly are they?"

"Here but not here. It's complicated."

"So explain it! I need to know where my son is!"

"It's called a pocket universe. See, they're in the same location as us, just…a different world. They can hear us, but can't see us. Same for us; we can't see them, but we can hear them if we try. And thanks to you, we were able to have a conversation."

"That sounds really crazy. But you did say you've seen crazier, so I'll take it. However, you *better* not be lying to me or I'll kill you."

"I wouldn't lie about something like this, Joyce. I promise."

"Thank you, Doctor Smith."

"Call me John. Or just Doctor, depending on what you prefer. Now, do you know of anyone else who might have seen anything…out of the ordinary?"

"You could try to talk to Will's friends. I don't know if they'd want to talk, but it's worth a shot. I know they've been sneaking around looking for him even though they aren't supposed to. I figured they might see something and tell me about it, so I kept my mouth shut. Besides, I don't think grounding them would've worked very well. I know how they are." She tells him their names and what they look like.

He grins. "Perfect. Do you know where they might be right now?"

"They're...in school, Doctor. Hawkins Middle School, if you still want to find them. And…don't take this the wrong way, but I realized it's best if you leave now. My son and my ex-husband will be back any minute. We have to go to a funeral for someone who isn't dead. But they don't believe that. They already think I'm out of my mind, so I'd rather not add to it by them finding three strangers in the house." He grins for no apparent reason. "Alright then. You do what you need to do. I'll let you know if we find anything." He turns to Amy and Rory. "Now then, we should go look for Will's friends. They're in school, so I guess we'll just have to find them in a crowd; eh, Ponds?" Before they can respond, he's dragging them out the door. "Thanks for your help, Joyce!" He calls out before running off.

(A/N: Sort of filler, but still important. Next chapter will involve the Doctor and the Ponds meeting our favorite group of kids. And yes, it will be hilarious.)

3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3: Child's Play

(A/N: Some swearing in this chapter. You have been warned. But I mean, come on. Have you *seen* Stranger Things?)

"Come along, Ponds!" The Doctor was shouting as he ran ahead of them.
"We're coming, Raggedy Man! For God's sake, *slow down!* They're in a bloody *school!* 'S not like they're *going anywhere* for a while!"

"I don't like to waste time, Amelia. So hurry up," he shouted back impatiently.

"We *are* hurrying! I'm running out of breath, damn it!"

"Yes, Doctor. Amy needs to rest a bit. I should know, I'm a nurse."

"Oh, *fine.* You're no fun; you aren't fast enough. I'll slow down…a *bit.*"

Within a few minutes, they were on the school's premises. They couldn't go in until Amy stopped yelling at the Doctor, though.

"Bloody hell, Doctor! You can't just leave people behind whenever you want!"

"Alright, alright! I get it, Pond! Can we please just focus on the-"

Slap!

"Oh. Okay. Ouch. I get it. Lesson learned, Amy. Just promise to never do that again."

"Fine with me. Keep being stubborn, though, and I *will* do it again. Got it?"

He nodded. "Let's go find those three kids, then."

"Wait, Doctor." Amy's voice was gentler this time. "I know I promised

not to mention it, but are you sure you're okay? After that thing with…Rose?" He sighs. "I'm fine, Amy. Let's focus on rescuing them. Her and Will. One way to do that is by getting information. One way to at least attempt to get information is by talking to Will's friends."

Apparently they were in the hallway near the AV room. Simple enough.
Less simple when he asked this question: "Are you Mike, Dustin, and Lucas?" One of them, he assumed it was Dustin based on Joyce's description, yelled, "SHIT!" and started running.

"What in the name of…? Oh well." He ran after them. "Oi! You three! Er…four?" He noticed the girl that was with them. Funny, Joyce hadn't mentioned her. "Come back! I just wanted to ask a couple questions!"

They ignored him and kept running, Dustin still yelling "shit" over and over. The girl, for some reason, looked really, *really* freaked out.

When they finally caught up with the group of kids, the Doctor gasped out, "Relax. Why are you running, anyway?"

Lucas-or at least he thought his name was Lucas- piped up, "We're running because this *idiot*"-he gestured to Dustin-"Decided to freak out on us. I *told* him to act natural!"

"Lucas, how the hell am I supposed to act natural when some British dude in a bow tie,"-he was obviously referring to the Doctor-"a weird-looking guy"-he pointed to Rory- "And a hot redhead who I've never seen before just *show up* looking for us?! They could be looking for the weirdo!"

"If they were after the weirdo, they'd have taken her already. Now, shut up, man. You're screwing with our mission."

"*Guys!*" That voice belonged to Mike. "Stop *fighting*." He turned to the Doctor, Amy, and Rory. "I'm Mike, that's Dustin, and that's Lucas." The Doctor grinned. "Good to know. I'm the Doctor, this is Amy, and that's her husband Rory. Now, who's your friend?" He glanced at the blonde girl who was watching everything with wide, almost owlish,

eyes. "What's your name, miss?"

"Elev-"

"Eleanor!" Mike cut her off. "She's my…cousin."

"Second cousin," Lucas supplied helpfully.

"Yeah, she's here for Will's funeral," Mike added.

"Oh, alright. Well, nice to meet you, Eleanor. Good name. I wish you were here under better circumstances, though."

"Thank you." Now that was an at least *slightly* strange reply. "Where are you from, Eleanor?" Amy asked.

Instantly her eyes went wide. They almost looked haunted. "Bad place," she said, her words like ice.
"Sweden!" Mike piped up. "I have a lot of Swedish family, so…"

"She hates it there," Lucas added.

"Cold! Sub-zero." Dustin said.

"Fair enough," was the Doctor's response. "Now, what are you doing?"

"We, uh…we're trying to get into the AV room. Emergency Heathkit radio use."

"Do I want to know what constitutes an emergency?"

Dustin grinned. "No, you do not."

Rory raised an eyebrow. "Don't injure anyone, please. I'd hate to be stitching people up when I'm off duty." Dustin looked confused.

"Huh?"

"He's a nurse, and he's in need of a break. So…need any help?"
Mike looked at his shoes. "Well, you could…get us in there…"

"So you haven't gotten permission to use the radio?"

'Well, no, but..."

The Doctor's laughing now. "What makes you think I could get you in there? What makes you think I *would?*"

"Run," all three of the boys say. Without another word, they all break into a sprint.

"Again?" he turns to Amy. "Seriously? What the bloody hell are they hiding? I was gonna help them, I just wanted to mess with them!" He shouts down the hallway.

"Kids! Come back! Oh, for God's sake…"

He chases them out into the schoolyard. "Wait! Stop freaking out and get over here!"

Catching up with them was harder this time. "And they've made it onto their bikes." He turned to the Ponds. "Stay here! You'll slow me down!"

He chased them through a playground, down some roads, and into the woods. All the while he yelled at them to slow down.

Running after them, he realized where they were going. Or more specifically, what they'd end up seeing.

They were headed *right for the TARDIS.*

"Wait up! Seriously, wait! You're about to see something very weird! I can explain it!"

"You'll see something weirder if you don't stop chasing us!" Mike threatened.

And then they got an eyeful of his spaceship. Naturally, they stopped.

Lucas broke the silence. "What the hell is a blue box doing in the woods?"

The Doctor walked up beside them, grinning. "If you hadn't run off,

you'd have never seen it. It's mine."

"How'd it get here? How did *you* get here?"

"Long story. Now, I would've gotten you into that room if you had decided not to panic. I was just messing with you. For fun," he said with a laugh.

Dustin spoke up this time. "Not cool, man. Funny I guess, but *not cool.* Do you have any idea what we're *dealing with?*"

"No, but you could explain it to me. I figured you were hiding something."

"Only if you let us look at the box up close."

"Dustin!" Mike yelled. "You'd betray our secrets just to look at a box? Remember what El said? We'd be in danger!"

"Mike, he obviously knows *nothing.* And what kind of bad guy would dress the way he does?"

This prompted an offended remark from the Doctor. "Oi! Bow ties are cool. But I'm not a bad guy, not to you anyway."

"See?"

"Alright, alright. Quit arguing. I'll let you look at my box if you answer some of my questions."

"Like what?"

"First of all, where did you last see Will?"

"On Mirkwood. It's a real road, we just made up the name. It's where Cornwallis and Kerley meet."

"Alright then. Funny, the name Mirkwood; I've heard that before. Isn't that from Lord of the Rings?"

"Well, the Hobbit," Dustin corrected.

Lucas rolled his eyes. "Like I said before, you idiot, it doesn't matter!"

"He asked!" "Shut up!"

The Doctor snickered while they argued. "Alright, stop it. Now, have you heard from Will in any way?"

"What are you talking about?" Mike asked. "He's dead."

The Doctor gave him a look. "Mike, I know about the radio thing. You wanted to use it to talk to Will because you know he's trapped somewhere."

"He knows about the weirdo, Mike!" Lucas shouted. "We need to run!" "Shut up! We don't know what he knows!"

"Now I'm curious. Who are you referring to with the phrase, 'the weirdo'?"

"Oh, her. Eleanor." Mike says.

"That's kind of mean. Why do you call her that?"

"Because, she's weird! Duh!" Lucas said, still loud.

"Alright, enough about nicknames. Just what are you hiding?"

"No more questions until we look at your box," snapped Dustin. He crossed his arms as if to seal his obstinacy.

The Doctor raised his hands in surrender. "Alright, fine."

He headed towards the TARDIS. The doors opened with a snap of his fingers.

Immediately, the three boys' jaws hit the floor. "That's awesome!" "Yes it is, Lucas. Now, would you like to go inside?"

"We can *go in?!*" Dustin exclaimed. "But...we won't fit."
The Doctor grinned like a madman. "Come around to the front and see for yourself. Just…try not to touch anything."

They all scurried towards the front door. When they got a glimpse of the interior, their jaws practically unhinged. Except for Eleven, who

just took in everything with her owlish brown eyes.

"How the hell…" Dustin nearly gasped for breath. "Come on, guys!"

Numbly, they followed Dustin into the TARDIS. "Remember what I said." the Doctor was trailing along behind them. "Do not *touch anything.*"

"How is this possible?!" Mike half asked, half shouted. "It's bigger on the"- "Bigger on the inside, yes. Advanced technology. Well, I say advanced, but she's actually more…alien."

"*Alien?"* Dustin repeated. "So, are *you* an alien?"

The Doctor grinned again. "Yes. Is that alright?"

"Is that alright? That's awesome!" Dustin yelled. "Holy shit, guys! We're standing in front of an alien!"

"Language, please, Dustin. And my species has a name, you know. Time Lord."

"*Time Lord?* What kind of species is *that?"*

"One that can travel in time, Lucas."

"So…this is a time machine/spaceship?"

"I suppose that's one way of putting it, Mike. But she's not an it. She's a she. Best ship in the universe, the Old Girl is. She's called the TARDIS."

"TARDIS? That's kind of…weird."

"Well, an old friend of mine made up the name from the initials. It's an acronym. Stands for Time and Relative Dimensions in Space. And technically, we're inside another dimension as opposed to the phone box outside. All Time Lord technology is like that." He grinned at their facial expressions. "I've lost you, haven't I?"

Mike shrugged. "Sort of, but I don't really care. It's cool." He turned to Eleven. "What do you think, El?"

Eleven was admiring some of the small details in the interior. Currently, she was mesmerized by the control panel. "Pretty," she murmured; a hint of a smile on her lips.

The Doctor grinned at that. "Well, she appreciated the compliment. So yes, I suppose she is pretty," he put in.

"I don't get it," Lucas said. "You talk about it like it's alive."

"*She* is alive, Lucas. Sentient. She thinks. She talks to me, too. You just can't hear her because you aren't a telepath."

"You can read minds?!" That was Dustin.

"Ah, so you know a bit about telepathy then. I'm not really telepathic, just sort of telepathic. But that's not important right now. And to answer your question, Dustin, I can only read minds if I'm close to the brain. If I were to read your mind, for example, I'd have to put my hands on your head. Which I don't plan on doing."

"Good; I don't want anybody in there!"

"Most don't. I only do it when necessary. Usually just to make someone forget something about their own future. I can do it on myself, too."

"You can *make yourself forget stuff?* Can you teach me how to make my parents forget all the embarrassing stuff I did when I was little?"

He chuckled. "*Unfortunately,* Dustin, you're human. Human brains aren't powerful enough to handle being telepathic. It'd kill you. And I prefer not to mess with peoples' minds too much, anyway."

"So you're not evil."

"I try not to be. Only those who actually are evil see me that way." He paused, shuffled his feet.
"Now, I have to ask about your friend…El here. Her name isn't really Eleanor, is it?"

"No. Her real name's Eleven. But we call her El for short."

"Her name is Eleven?"

"Yes, and she has a tattoo of the number eleven on her arm! It's real," Mike added, and then paused. "By the way, what did you say your name was?" "I'm the Doctor. So just call me 'Doctor', alright?"
"Alright, but…what's your last name? Doctor who?"
"It's just 'the Doctor'. Or at least, it's what everyone calls me. I don't know why." He pauses, thinks for a moment. "I call me 'the Doctor' too. Still don't know why. But anyways, I'd like to have a word with your friend."

He turned to face her. "Eleven?" he asked quietly, hoping he wouldn't scare her.
She turned to face him, blinking her wide brown eyes. "Yes?"
"What…happened to you?"

Instantly the haunted look in her eyes returned. "Bad people."

"Did they take you away? From your parents? Or from anyone?"
She shook her head.

"So you always lived where they kept you?"

She nodded. "They made me find people. I'd listen. Or hurt them."

"The people they made you find? You'd listen to them? Or you'd hurt them? How?"
She pointed to her head, then continued. "If I didn't, they would hurt me."

"Well, I won't let them hurt you anymore, Eleven. After I find their friend; and my friend too, I'll make sure you're safe."
She fixed her intense gaze on him. "Promise?" He nodded. "I promise."

He turned to the boys. "Why would bad people be after her? And how could they use her as a spy or an assassin? She's a *child*. Any ideas?"

"Well, there is one thing…"

"Dustin! We promised not to tell."

"Look, Mike. Your girlfriend already told the alien about where she's from. She's never talked this much! So, we might as well go full stop. Look around, Mike! We are inside an alien spaceship! An *alien spaceship!* So shut up and let me tell him."

"Fine. But she's not my girlfriend, so *you* better shut up about that."

The Doctor's really laughing now. As in, positively howling, nearly falling to the floor laughing. "Oh, that was priceless. *Thank you.* Needed a good laugh, me. That's much better."
Once he composed himself, he turned to Dustin. "Now, what was it you wanted to tell me?"

"Eleven has powers, Doc."

He tilts his head slightly. "Come again?" Before they can answer, he adds, "Oh, and while we're on the subject, don't call me 'Doc'. Just *don't.* Now, explain what you mean by 'powers', Dustin."

"She can move stuff with her mind! She slammed a door that was all the way across the room! It's like Yoda, or maybe Professor X. And she can listen to things on the radio. She's been using her powers to channel Will!"

He grinned. "So, telekinesis and telepathy then. Now, how is that possible?"

He faced Eleven again. "Eleven, were you listening earlier when I said that I could look in other people's heads?" She nodded. "Alright, good. Now, is it okay if I take a quick peek? I just want to make sure you aren't sick. Or hurt. Is that okay?" She nodded again. "Okay."

He gave her a gentle smile. "Now, I'm going to put my hands on the sides of your head, like this. Alright?"

When she didn't protest after a few moments of this, he allowed himself to look into her memories.
And what he saw horrified him.

He saw a young child taking orders from a white-haired man. How he forced her to use her telepathy to spy on people and/or harm them telekinetically. And he saw how he punished her for not doing what

he wanted. When he got his hands on that man…

Then Eleven cried out in fear. "Pain…" she moaned. He assumed her painful memories were resurfacing. "No, it's just your old memories, Eleven. Stay with me." Then she uttered a word that made him break the telepathic contact.

"War."

He pulled away from her and out of her mind, but still the haunted look in her eyes remained. She opened her mouth again. "People dying," she rasped. "You were there."

"How did you…?"

"They burned. You killed them."

He shut his eyes, trying to block out the memories she was describing. Somehow she had seen *his* memories. And not just any memories, either. She saw the ones he'd do anything to forget.
His memories of the Time War.

"Doc, what's she talking about? Was she in a war in a past life or something?"

He shook his head. "No, no. Not her. She somehow saw *my* memories." He looked down at the floor. "I was in a war, not her. I'm the only Time Lord left. I really did kill them all. I may not have murdered them, but only I lived. The thing about war is, no one really wins. There are survivors, yes. But no winners. And in this case, the only survivor was me."

He looked back up. "But that was hundreds of years ago. What's past is past. Let's focus on rescuing your friend, hmm?"

"Alright, fine by me. I don't do touchy-feely. But when you say hundreds of years…exactly how old are you?" Dustin asked. The Doctor grinned. "I like this one. Always asking the right questions. And to answer your newest question, I'm about 1200 years old."
Cue more shouts of, "What?!" and "Holy shit!" Then came the usual, "Language!" "Relax, Doc." "*I told you not to call me Doc!*" followed by a smart remark and laughter. This continued the whole way back,

especially as he explained regeneration. And the two hearts thing.

Finally, they met up with Amy and Rory again. After explaining to them Eleven's situation; as well as what a pocket universe was, the children had an idea.

"Hey Doc, didn't you say that an entrance to another dimension would mess with the magnetic field?"

"As a matter of fact, Dustin, yes. I did. Your point?" He'd given up on trying to get them to stop calling him "Doc".

"You said you were gonna scan for the disruption with your screwdriver thing and follow it. Well, I know how we can help."
"No, no, and no! No helping involved, Dustin. You're too young. If something happened to you, what would I tell your parents?"

"Would you let us help if we promised to leave if it got really dangerous?"

"Well…maybe. Let's hear your idea."

"Well first, we need to get El to the Heathkit. That way we might be able to tell Will we're coming. Plus, I'd like to have more proof that he's alive. And then, we can use our compasses. Because a disruption in the magnetic field"-

"-Interferes with the compasses pointing north, yes. So you want to follow their north to reach the entrance, or gate, or whatever you want to call it. Dustin, that's *brilliant!* You're a genius!"

Dustin looked awfully pleased with himself. "Finally, somebody who appreciates it." He grinned widely. "So, does this mean you'll let us help? Even though *I'm* the only genius?"

"Hey! Dustin, you're a smartass, not a genius." Mike's yelling at him again.

"The Doc says I'm a genius, Mike. Deal with it."

"Oi, you two! Stop fighting! Please, can you be civil for five *bloody*

minutes?!" The Doctor yelled. Realizing what he'd said, he covered his mouth with his hand. "Oh! Sorry," he said, and it got quiet for a few moments.

Finally, Amy spoke up. "Look, Doctor, I think them helping is a good idea. They might pick up on stuff that would go over our heads. Just as long as nobody calls me hot again."

The Doctor chuckled a bit. Sighing, he turned to the kids. "Alright, fine. You can help. On two conditions, though. One, you turn back and let the adults handle it as soon as it gets dangerous. And two: Dustin, you need to apologize to Amy. I expect you made her uncomfortable."

Dustin sighs. "We accept your terms. Just…don't send us away if a twig snaps." He put his hands in his pockets, shuffled his feet, and then turned to Amy.

"Sorry I called you hot, Amy. It's just, well…you are."

"Dustin!" That was Mike. "You can't just call random girls hot all the time!"

"But it's *true*, Mike. I mean, have you *seen* her hair?! Or heard her accent? I like the accent, okay?! Is that a crime?" He faced Amy again. "So yeah, I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable. What accent do you have, by the way?"

Amy is giggling now. "Apology accepted, Dustin. And I will admit, I'm rather flattered now, actually. In a way. And it's a Scottish accent."

"So…you're from Scotland?"

"Originally, yes."

"You and Rory aren't aliens?"

"Sadly, no. It'd be cool if we were, though."

"Yeah, it would be. And if the Doc's an alien, how come he sounds British?"

"I've had that accent for a long while, Dustin. It never seems to change through most of my regenerations. I was Scottish once, though. Never again," he shuddered. Then his manner changed yet again. He clapped his hands together, the way he always did when changing the subject.
"But enough about all that. Let's get you to that radio, yeah?"

(A/N: I was originally going to put more in this chapter, but it was so long I decided to cut it off here. Sorry if it feels like a filler chapter, there was more dialogue than I anticipated. Stay tuned for the next one! Oh, and I own nothing, obviously.)

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4: The Woods

(A/N: Thanks to inspiration from a review I got, I'm starting this chapter with Rose and Will's POV. There will probably be more swearing. Insert usual disclaimer blah blah blah.)

The world is dark and cold. Apparently, it resembled a small town: Hawkins, Indiana in the year 1983. However, the *actual* Hawkins didn't have a bloodthirsty monster roaming freely about the place.

When Rose had first used her modified vortex manipulator to cross into her original universe, she'd had no idea it would glitch due to a disturbance and pull her here. And she was stuck here until she found a way out- for some reason, pulling her into this pocket universe had damaged her manipulator; and she couldn't fix it.

"It's like the Vale of Shadows…"

Rose turned her head, clearing her throat. It was hard to breathe this thick, foul-smelling air. "The Vale of Shadows? What's that? It sounds familiar, but I don't recall what that actually is."

Will chuckled lightly-leave it to a kid to still find something to laugh about, even in a situation like this. "It's from Dungeons and Dragons. You know, the board game? Anyway, the Vale of Shadows is like an evil dimension- similar to our world, but with monsters and stuff."

Rose smiled a bit. "I could see this being like the Vale of Shadows. Except this place is real," she murmured. "Not to mention, we could actually die- I mean, I'm not about to let that happen, but it isn't impossible."

The monster hadn't found them in a while, mostly because they weren't bleeding- unlike that poor girl's body they had found. For some reason, it only ate things that were already bleeding. Rose had been pulled here, so the monster hadn't taken her. It *had* taken Will, though. But if it wasn't going to eat him, why had it taken him?

Rose had been taking care of Will for the last few days- finding food and water that was safe, keeping him warm, and making sure they stayed hidden. And they had kept one another's spirits up- they both had plenty of stories to tell.

Currently, they were hiding in a sort of broken house. Still standing, but run-down. The monster rarely wandered near them, so they had decided to make a shelter there. Will would wait for Rose there while she went to get food and/or look for a way out. So far, food wasn't too difficult to find- plenty of canned things in the more civilized parts. As for finding a way out, though, Rose had had no luck.

Another thing in their shelter was a radio- somehow, they were able to hear messages from the normal universe with it. And there were certain locations with mini-rifts, such as Will's house, where one could hear speech without the use of a radio. The problem was, their speech would not be heard on the other side, and the rifts would only open for a short period of time.
Rose would still be waiting to speak to the Doctor if the monster hadn't chased after her shortly after the rift had closed. Will had been waiting outside the house and had screamed for help. They had ran like their lives depended on it- which, of course, they had.
Funny, Will still doesn't know about the conversation I had with the Doctor…or my little inability to age or die, she realized.

Will knew who the Doctor was- he'd begged her to tell more stories of their adventures. So far, she'd gotten up to the time they met Queen Victoria- and the werewolf, of course. He'd laughed really hard when she told him they had planned to visit 1979, but the Doctor had messed up and they'd ended up in 1879.

She knew, though, that the one thing Will would never find out- at least, she wouldn't tell him directly- was that Rose had fallen in love with the Doctor. He'd never know of the unfinished sentence on Bad Wolf Bay, or how, many months prior to that, the Doctor had given one of his lives to save hers. Which was when she'd stopped aging and had been unable to die. And he *definitely* wouldn't know about the Doctor's other self- how she'd promised the Doctor forever, but she couldn't keep that promise to both of him.

"Rose? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Will. I was just…thinking. Well, remembering, really."

"Were you remembering all the adventures you went on with the Doctor?"

"Something like that, yes."

"Do you miss him?"

"Very much. He was my friend, and I really cared about him," she said with a sigh. *Loved him,* she reminded herself. *You still do.* "Besides, I haven't seen him in a long time."

Which was true- she hadn't seen the original Doctor for a few centuries. And his other self had died just after a few years of marriage- Rose had died too, but she had come back. Boy, was the Doctor going to freak out about that.
God, she missed him. Both of them, if she was being honest.

"How long has it been?"

"I'd say about…two and a half; maybe three centuries," she murmured. "I'm older than I look. I don't age, for reasons I won't get into."

"Was it because of something that happened on one of your adventures?"

"Yes, Will. I'm not going to go into detail, but I had to do something dangerous to save his life. I succeeded, but it…altered me. So now, I don't age; and every time I die, I…come back."

"So you don't age, and you come back when you die…Rose, you're immortal!"

She grinned. "Yeah, I guess I am."

Their conversation was cut off by the crackling of radio static. Rose spoke into the microphone. "Hello?" Then came a voice that Rose recognized immediately.

The Doctor.

Amy was flabbergasted. There was no other word to describe it, really. After all, there was a *telekinetic and telepathic human child* with them. How that was possible, Amy didn't know. If the Doctor knew, he hadn't said. And *her name was Eleven?* And as for the other kids, well…let's just say she had nearly lost it more than once. "Lost it" meaning both nearly screaming at them and laughing.

The Doctor, as always, was bouncing around and grinning like a madman. "So…you want me to unlock a door? I can do that. I've been using my sonic screwdriver to open things since I first stole- er, borrowed, the TARDIS!"

He walked towards the AV room, and used the sonic to open it. "Viola! This'll work on pretty much anything, except for deadlock seals. Oh, and wood. I should really do something about that," he muttered. "But, anyway"-

"Wait!" Dustin interrupted. "If it doesn't work on wood, how'd you open the door?"

"Oh, that's simple. I used it on the lock, not the door itself. The *lock* is metal."

"Raggedy Man, can we please get on with this? There's a kid who's lost. We can waste time later."

"I was just answering a question, Pond."

"Well, *you* were the one who said you didn't like to waste time."

"Fair point. Now, let's get this show on the road, shall we?" He muttered something about "never using that phrase ever again" before entering the room.

Sitting on a desk was the enormous Heathkit radio. He turned it on, flipping just about every switch in sight. "I think that should do it. And just in case, I've boosted the signal with my screwdriver. Now, anything else you need me to do?"

"Nah, we're good. You might wanna watch this, though. It'll be awesome," Dustin said.

"I was going to, anyway. If I observe her abilities, I might be able to better understand them."

Eleven sat down in the chair in front of the desk; and put one hand on the radio, closing her eyes. Static began crackling, getting louder before giving way to faint words.

A woman's voice. "Hello?"

That was when the Doctor's hearts nearly stopped. *Rose.* His Rose.
He was barely able to stay coherent enough to lean over and speak into the microphone.

"Rose? Rose, it's me."

Apparently she heard him. "Doctor! Is that you? Sorry, stupid question. I *know* that's you."
He grinned. "Of course it's me. Who else would know your name?" Pausing, he cleared his throat. "Is Will alright?"

"He's fine; he's right here with me. He can hear you too."
Then came his voice. "Hi, Doctor. I've heard a lot about you."
Another massive grin. "Is that right? Well, I'm here with your friends. I'm not sure how long I'll be able to talk with you, so…I just wanted to say that we're coming to get you. Both of you. So try to stay safe until we find you. It could be a couple of days, maybe more, maybe less. Try not to die on me, okay?"

Rose laughed softly. "Don't worry, we're safe, sort of. For now, anyway. And Doctor? I promise not to die on you if you promise not to leave me on a beach again."

His expression grows more solemn with those words. "I'm not leaving you again, ever. I promise you that. And…" he sighs, then his voice softens. "Oh, it can wait. Better to tell you in person, and it's something you already know, anyway."

Suddenly, sparks shoot from the radio, causing it to burst into flames. Eleven's eyes roll back in her head, and she collapses. The Doctor sees blood coming from her nose.

"What the hell?!" he shouts. "What just happened?"

Dustin speaks up first. "Don't worry, Doc. When she uses her powers, it drains her energy. She just needs to rest and eat. Now would somebody *please* grab a fire extinguisher?!"

Rose sighed. Of course that *had* to happen. Muttering to herself, she said, "What is it with that man and never finishing his sentences?" For he'd started to say something and trailed off, claiming it was something she already knew. And then the radio signal went out.

"Rose? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Will. I'm always fine," she said, a bit too quickly. Her eyes, however, revealed her true emotions; for a single tear rolled down her face. And Will wasn't the type to easily miss things.

"You're crying. You're not okay, Rose," he said softly. "You must really, *really,* miss the Doctor."

"You're right, I do," she sniffed. "There's a lot you don't know, mostly because I don't…I don't like to talk about it."

"It's okay. I think I figured out part of it, though."

"Suddenly I'm curious," she put in with a watery chuckle. "What is it that you have supposedly figured out, Will Byers?"

"I'm gonna answer your question with a question, so here goes. Was he your boyfriend?"

Rose blushed bright red. "No."

"But you *do* love him, don't you? I mean, you're blushing."

"Yeah," she sighs, then smiles. "Yeah, I guess I do."

Will was waiting for her, so Rose knew she had to be quick. She hadn't seen the monster anywhere though, which was a good sign. Unless, of course, it was hunting in the real world.

Rose continued to make her way through the snowy woods, trying to

ignore just how cold and stifling the air was. "I'm gonna bloody freeze to death out here," she muttered to herself.

She was stopped in her tracks by the strange appearance of a tree. The base of the tree appeared to have a sort of...web in front of it. Or more accurately, *in* it.

Curiosity getting the better of her, she knelt down in front of the tree trunk. "What...the hell..."

The webbing had the appearance of a spider's web, but was much thicker. And there seemed to be light pulsating from it. When Rose touched it, she nearly recoiled. It was just as slimy as the...stuff the monster used to encase its prey in. Taking a deep breath, she pushed it out of the way, ordering herself not to become sick.

There was a narrow passageway, almost like a tunnel, behind the web. And when she strained her eyes, she could almost *see* the real world. She had finally found a way out.

Rose decided to try to go through first, and then come back for Will. After all, there was no point in getting his hopes up if she turned out to be wrong.

Inching forward, flat on her stomach, Rose made her way into the tunnel. It wasn't as long as she'd anticipated, because she was near the end after just a few moments. Pushing her hand through, she felt a *real* breeze on her skin.

Laughing breathlessly, she squeezed her way out of the tunnel. It was just as she'd hoped. The air was much warmer, and she could feel leaves on the ground instead of snow. She took in several gratifying breaths. Now all she had to do was go back for Will.

But then, a sudden wave of dizziness made the ground lurch underneath her. She fought it, but gave way to blackness after a few moments. Seconds after she lost consciousness, the gap began to close.

The Doctor was having a difficult time keeping up with these

children. Not only were they distracted easily, they never waited for him. He had the feeling they were going to be the death of him, somehow.

"I said wait for me before you go running off somewhere! Who knows what's out here."

Dustin tried to argue. "We've been in these woods a million times, Doc. We know what's out here."

"Have you dealt with dangerous alien monsters a million times, Dustin? No? Well, I have. So you need to do as I-"

"Wait!" Dustin cut him off abruptly. "I think I see something over there!" He pointed to the left. "It looks like a jacket or a sweater or something."

Lucas rolled his eyes. "Somebody probably left their jacket out here, genius. So what?"

"I don't know, guys...my gut's telling me to check it out. It looks kinda off." Dustin turned to the Doctor. "I'm gonna check this out. If something goes wrong, I'll scream really loud. Just let me look by myself."

"Alright, that's fine. But if something chases you...run," he said with a grin.

"Doctor!" That was Amy. "You aren't the least bit concerned it might be dangerous?"

"Actually, no. Like Lucas said, it's most likely an abandoned item of clothing. But if Dustin wants to check it out, he can. My biggest problem is that you lot have been dashing off in every direction without looking where you're going," he concluded.

Dustin grinned. "Thanks. Be right back!"
Without another word, he ran in the direction of the thing that had drawn his attention.
After a few seconds, though, they heard a very panicked, very loud, "*Oh my God!*"

He ran back, panting, his voice frantic. "Doc! Guys! There's a *woman* over here!"

(A/N: DUN DUN DDDUUUUNNNN! Cliffhanger my friends, cliffhanger. Muahaha)

5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5: The Woman

(A/N: I am *so* sorry this took so long. Crazy life, mental block, etc. Oh, and nothing but the plot is mine.)

The Doctor was numb with shock yet again. "Hold on...did you say a woman?"

Dustin nodded, his eyes still wide. "Yeah, I think she might be dead...or just passed out, I don't know," he said, looking at his feet. "I didn't think to check."

"Wait a minute," interjected Lucas. "Didn't we talk to a lady with the radio earlier? You said she was your friend." His eyes went wide. "Do you think she found a way out of there? And wasn't she with Will? We talked to both of them. What happened to him?"

The Doctor sighed, put his hands in his pockets. "Only one way to know for sure." He grimaced and started to walk in the direction where Dustin saw her.

Eleven walked up beside him, taking his hand. "What happened to your friend?" she asked softly, her eyes wide and curious. "Is she okay?"

The Doctor, in turn, smiled down at her. "I'm not sure about either of those things, Eleven," he said with a sigh. "I'll have to ask her." Looking back up, he shut his eyes and hoped she was alright.

Something told Amy that the woman was, in fact, this mysterious "Rose Tyler", who was apparently in love with the Doctor. At least, she knew Rose had to have a reason for saying "I love you."

Rory wasn't really focusing on the woman's identity, just hoping that she wasn't hurt too badly. But if she was, he knew he'd try to help her for everyone's sake.

"Over here," Dustin gestured with his arm. "Come on."

A few moments later, they saw a woman lying on her back at an awkward angle, her hands splayed out at her sides. Her eyes were closed, making her look as though she'd fallen asleep; peaceful. Her clothes were tattered and worn out, and her long blonde hair was dirty and scraggly.

"Who is she? Is she dead?" Mike asked.

The Doctor didn't answer right away, he simply stepped closer to her. Bending down, he checked her pulse. "No, she's not dead, but her pulse is weak. Her body temperature is dangerously high. And yet, she's also very cold to the touch."

He breathed out a sigh. "Oh, Rose...no doubt you've been through a lot," he murmured.

Amy watched him, both curious and concerned. He'd said her name like it was something sacred. It seemed that Rose meant more to the Doctor than she'd anticipated.

He stood up, turned to face them. "Her name is Rose Tyler, and she's an old friend of mine. How she survived in there, much less escaped, I don't know. We'll have to ask her once she wakes up. It'll most likely be a few hours before that happens, though."

"So what do we do?" Dustin inquired, his tone still slightly panicked. "We can't just leave her here."

The Doctor glanced back at her again. "You're right, we can't. We should take her back to the TARDIS. Rory, I want you to make sure she cools off and stays dry once we get there; like I said, she's got a high fever. Probably dehydrated, too. We'd better head over there quickly."

Rory and Amy both nodded in agreement. The children just stood there, shocked.

With an amount of gentleness that surprised even himself, the Doctor scooped Rose up in his arms, taking care not to jostle her too much. Silently, they made their way to the TARDIS.

Before Rose even tried to open her eyes, she felt a searing pain in her head. It took all of her strength not to cry out. Her eyes burned as though they were on fire, and her chest felt heavy. Slowly, she made herself open her eyes.

She's in what appears to be an infirmary. Sterile white walls and floors, the smell of antiseptic. And she can hear the loud beeps of the heart monitor currently attached to her. And another tube, most likely from an IV, is in her arm. She supposes that someone found her passed out and took her to a hospital. Exactly where this hospital is located, however, she has no idea.

Curiosity (and a bit of fear) getting the better of her, she attempts to sit up. Before she succeeds, however, she's stopped by a hand on her arm.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you."

She turns toward whoever just said that. Before she can say anything, the man who just spoke to her smiles. "Relax. My name's Rory. I'm a nurse; I'm just making sure you'll be okay. But right now you shouldn't overexert yourself. Just lie back down, and I'll go tell everyone that you're awake." Rory exits the room almost silently.

All Rose could do was nod and lie back. *What the hell is going on here? Where am I?* But the panic that had been rising in her chest died when she felt a familiar hum in the back of her head.

The TARDIS.

"I'm home," she whispers under her breath. Despite all that had happened, Rose had to smile. She was back where she belonged. But what about Will?

She's broken out of her thoughts by the sound of the door opening. A different man enters the room. Her eyes flit over to him briefly.

He's tall and thin, wearing what appears to be a suit and a bow tie. She knows who this is immediately.

Rose grins, but doesn't sit up. "Hello, Doctor."

She closes her eyes as a wave of pain hits her in the head. She hears him say, "Hello, Rose." His tone changes to one of worry. "Rose? What is it? Are you alright?"

She nods despite the pain. "'M fine, just got a bit of a headache. D'you have anything for that?"

He nods, clears his throat. "Yes, I have some medicine you can take." He walks away and returns with a glass of water and two small white pills. "Here. I found some aspirin."

Rose raises an eyebrow at that. "Thought you had a fatal allergy to aspirin."

"I do, but that doesn't mean I don't keep any in the med bay in case someone else needs it."

She grins, takes the pills from him. "That's thoughtful of you." Quickly she washes down the pills with water. "Hopefully that'll kick in soon."

He looks at her worriedly. "You're still weak, Rose. You're dehydrated, and your fever hasn't completely broken yet. Which is why I need you to get some sleep. Real sleep, not just blacking out."

She chuckles a bit. "Yes sir," she says jokingly.

Rose knew that her attempt to make light of the situation worked when the Doctor smiled. "I mean it. Just get some rest, alright? I'll explain everything later," he adds as an afterthought.

She nodded in agreement. "Alright. Could you just...stay for a minute?"

He sighs. "Yeah, if you want me to."

"Thanks, I just...don't want to be alone right now."

The Doctor sat down in a chair beside the bed she was lying in. When he did so, Rose reached out with her hand.

"Doctor?"

"Yes? Something wrong?"

"No. I just wanted...er, would you...hold my hand?"

Wordlessly, he took her hand in his. Something about that made Rose feel much safer. She smiled, closing her eyes. "Goodnight."

They stayed there, silent, for several minutes, his hand tightly grasping hers. Right before Rose fell asleep, she felt him let go of her hand, but she was too tired to let him know she was still awake. Nearly an instant before sleep overtook her, she felt him move her hair out of the way and press a kiss to her forehead. "Goodnight, Rose."

Rory was currently conversing quietly with his wife. "She's fine, Amy. A little dehydrated still, but her fever's gone down. She won't die."

"Thank God. I'm glad she'll be okay, if only for the Doctor's sake."

He tilted his head, confused. "What do you mean?"

Amy rolled her eyes. "She means a lot to him, love. He's been very worried about her."

"I wonder if he ever-"

"If he ever loved her?" she finished for him.

Rory nodded. "Well, that's one way of putting it, yeah," he said, looking at his feet. "Doubt he'll say anything to either of us, though."

Amy nodded. "When it comes to emotion, he's pretty private." She was forced to change the subject when she heard a loud crashing sound. Whirling around, she yells, "*Who did that?!*"

She turns to look at Lucas and Dustin, both with guilty looks on their faces. She opens her mouth to say something else, but they beat her to it. Both of them say at the same time, "It was him!"

Then they turn to each other, and again shout in unison: "TRAITOR!"

Amy barely manages to pull them off of each other. "No need to fight! Just tell me what's broken."

"Uh….nothing," Dustin says, looking down at his feet.

"Tell me the truth," she replies sternly.

"It was some stupid vase! Dustin thought it was a good idea to throw rocks around!" Lucas says. Amy turns to Dustin.

"Dustin, no more throwing rocks. Both of you, go clean it up."

Lucas protests. "But...I didn't-"

"No buts. Just clean it up."

After sending them to clean up the shattered vase, Amy turns her attention to Mike and Eleven. He was talking quietly, and she was smiling. "At least those two aren't causing trouble," she says to Rory.

Rory nodded in agreement. "Hopefully the other two won't blow anything up before the Doctor gets back. If they did, I honestly wouldn't be surprised."

"What's this about blowing stuff up?"

They both turn around to see the Doctor standing in front of them; looking relieved but still worried.

"Doctor," Amy gasps out. "Please tell me she's okay. I mean, Rory said she was, but..."

The Doctor grinned. "Ye of little faith, Pond. She's fine, I can assure you. Just took me awhile to get her to go back to sleep. Poor girl, she doesn't know when to quit."

Amy breathed a sigh of relief. "Again, thank God. And I was wondering if-"

She's cut off by the sound of running footsteps. "Hey Doc!" Dustin and Lucas both grinned up at him.

He smiled in return. "Hi, Dustin. Lucas," he said, acknowledging them with a nod.

Amy gave them a sharp look. "Do you want to tell him what happened or should I?"

Lucas spoke first. "Doctor, before we start, just let me say that I had nothing to do with-"

"Bull! You didn't try to stop me, did you?!" Dustin cut him off. "It was your fault the rocks hit the vase to begin-"

"Both of you, stop it. Just tell me what happened and be done with it. *Please*," the Doctor said firmly.

Dustin looked at his shoes. "Well, we, um...may have been throwing rocks...and it...um..."

"What the idiot is trying to say is that we broke a vase," Lucas interrupted.

"I made them clean it up," Amy added.

He nodded. "That's fine. Just...don't ever throw rocks inside again," he said, unsure of how else to respond.

Dustin nodded. "Okay, subject change," he said suddenly. "Is your girlfriend okay?"

The Doctor raised an eyebrow at the question. "Sorry...my *what?*"

"You know, your girlfriend. Romantic interest, partner-"

"I know what girlfriend means, Dustin. What I don't understand is why you chose to make an assumption on the nature of my relationship with Rose."

"Oh, I just figured...you were all worried, and it looked like..." he stops when he realizes the Doctor is practically glaring at him. "So...she's not your girlfriend? Just a friend?"

He nods. "Yes, precisely. Now-"

"Uh, Doctor?" A shy voice cut in. He turned to face who spoke- Mike.

"Why is everyone interrupting me today?" he asked, exasperated. "It's alright, Mike, go ahead," he added when he saw the hurt look on Mike's face.

"Well, uh...El says that the gate is somewhere that's not safe. I dunno where she's talking about or what she means, but I don't think-"

"That I'd let you come with me if I knew that?"

Mike nodded. "Yeah, I mean...I *wanna* come with you, but I don't want anyone to get hurt," he said finally.

Dustin chose to interject his opinion then. "Mike! Being all noble isn't gonna change the fact that a party member is stuck in another dimension! We help him, dangerous or not."

"We'll be no help if we're *dead!*"

The Doctor cut back in. "Listen to me, all of you! Lucas, Eleven, you too. Look, Will might be your friend, and I understand wanting to help him. But, like Mike said before, you can't help him if you're dead. And I wouldn't be able to forgive myself if I knowingly put you in danger and something happened to you."

He hears a strange sound nearby, but ignores it.

Mike chooses to ask a question then. "Well, is there anything we *can* do?"

The Doctor nodded. "Yes, as a matter of fact, there is. The more we know about the nature of this other dimension, the easier it will be for us to make sure everyone gets out of this alive. So, keep an eye out for anything out of the ordinary, and tell me about it."

"How?"

Before the Doctor can answer, he's interrupted by a new voice. One he hadn't heard in a very long time. Unless, of course, you count a recent brief conversation.

"Well, I'll be damned. Never thought I'd see the day when you were babysitting."

The Doctor whirls around, confusion and shock adding to his clumsiness. "Rose! What...how...you were just..."

She giggles at the expression on his face. "Oh, yeah. Forgot to mention it, but I heal much faster now. Especially with treatment. And I don't need as much sleep. So, half hour nap, and I'm good as new!"

His eyes are rivaling the size of fried eggs now. "But that's...that's not..."

"Possible?" she finishes for him. He nods.

"I thought so, too. But, like I said before...Bad Wolf," she says dramatically, underscoring her statement with a sly grin.

A loud shout from Dustin interrupts them. "Alright, what exactly is going on here?"

(A/N: Sorry it's short, I just felt this was the best place to stop. More Rose/Doctor tension and Rose interacting with the kids in the next chap! Spoiler: Dustin thinks she's hot.)

6. Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Rose's Return

(A/N: Here it is; the long-awaited chapter number six. Apologies for the long wait, I'm a slow writer. Love to all of my readers, and I hope you like it!)

"Seriously. What the hell is going on?" Rose smirked in response to Dustin's question.

"Well, I'm feeling a lot better. That and your friend is-"

"-Trapped in another dimension. Yeah, we know. But...how'd you know that?"

Rose sighed, stepping closer to the group. "I was there. Trying to cross universes when my vortex manipulator- that's what the device I was using to cross is called- anyway, it glitched and I got...pulled there. And I found Will."

"So you *are* the one we talked to on the radio. I thought so, but I wasn't 100% sure."

Rose grinned. "Tha' was me. And I believe we haven't properly introduced ourselves. I'm-"

"-Rose Tyler, we know that too. I'm Dustin. Dustin Henderson. These are my friends Lucas Sinclair and Mike Wheeler," he said, pointing to Lucas and Mike in turn.

"Well, 's nice to meet all of you," Rose said with a smile. She then looked back up at the man and woman that were also in the room, her expression turning to one of curiosity. "And you are…?"

Amy smiled. "Amelia Pond, but everyone calls me Amy. And this is my husband, Rory Williams."

Rose grinned again. "Nice to meet you as well, Amy Pond and Rory Williams," she said brightly. "Now, let's get to work, shall we?"

Walking into the console room, she allowed herself to take in the new interior. "Wow. You redecorated, I see. Well, 's not the Starship Enterprise, but I like it," she said, grinning at the Doctor.

He shrugged, smiling back at her. "Regeneration gone a bit wrong. Had to remodel the whole thing," he replied.

Rose raised an eyebrow. "Is that what happened to your fashion sense? 'Regeneration gone a bit wrong'?"

The Doctor looked very offended by her words. "Oi! Rose, I'll have you know that bow ties are cool," he replied.

Rose rolled her eyes. "Maybe," she said noncommittally.

The boys let out snorts of laughter at that, while Amy and Rory were confused by her words.

"Regeneration? What's that?" Amy asked.

In response, Rose sighed, an exasperated look on her face. "Oh, you don't know. I'm not surprised- he didn't tell me about it either till he did it right in front of me. Regeneration is a Time Lord's way of, well...cheating death, basically. It happens when-"

She's distracted, however, by a small voice. One that belongs to a young girl.

"Rose?"

Rose turns around to see a girl no older than the other kids- about twelve or thirteen; with blonde hair and brown eyes. Rose nods before speaking to her.

"Yes, that's me. And you are?"

"Eleven."

Rose raised her eyebrows. "Eleven? Well, that's an...interesting name,"

she said haltingly, though careful to not drop the gentle smile. "Where are your parents,

sweetheart?"

Eleven looked at the floor, shrugging. "I don't know."

Rose took a step closer to her, but Eleven backed up. Clearly, she didn't like being approached by strange adults. "Are you in trouble, love?"

She nodded. The Doctor saw this as a good time to cut in.

"I believe now is not the best time for long introductions. I'll explain everything later," he said, glancing at Rose, then Amy. "In the meantime, we have a plan to put together."

Mike spoke up then. "You told us to contact you if we see anything out of the ordinary at school. How do we do that?"

The Doctor's response sounded more like he was talking to himself. "Well...you want to blend in, so I can't give you any sort of alien communicator. It's 1983, so cell phones- good ones anyway- are out of the question. You'd draw too much attention if you were walking around with a cell phone that wouldn't even be invented for, say, another 30 years."

Mike's eyes bugged out of his head at that, but his tone was annoyed. "That doesn't help. And all we have is our walkie-talkies. If you went too far, we'd lose the signal. And *you* don't have one."

The Doctor had an odd look on his face as he turned to Rose.

"Rose, I'm having one of those...things. You know, a headache with pictures."

She raised an eyebrow, a tiny smile on her face. "An idea?"

"Yes, that. Brilliant! What would I do without you, Rose?"

He doesn't give her time to answer. "Right then! Anyways, I have an idea. I'll boost the signal on your...radio things with my sonic

screwdriver-"

"Walkie-talkies," they piped, correcting him.

"-Yeah, whatever they're called. Boost the signal, and then I'll sync them- I think that's the word- with some communicators so we'll be able to talk over really long distances. Oh, I'm brilliant!"

Rose rolled her eyes; muttering something that sounded suspiciously like "smart arse", though she was smiling.

Dustin grinned. "Sweet! So what kind of communicators will we be using, Doc?"

"You'll still use what you always do. Us, on the other hand? *We* will have these earpieces."

Fishing something out of his pocket, the Doctor held out what looked like four very small, triangular bits of metal. He handed one each to Rose, Amy, and Rory.

"Now then...little bit of tinkering should do the trick. You three, hand me your-"

Almost immediately, the three boys handed over their walkie-talkies. He did something to each of them with the sonic screwdriver before giving them back and doing the same to the earpieces. After that, he instructed them on which channels would let them talk to who.

"Perfect. Let's test this out, shall we?" He took his own communicator and placed it in his ear. "One of you say something."

"Hello?!" Dustin yelled into his walkie-talkie. Immediately, the Doctor flinched, putting his hand over his ear.

"Maybe...don't shout? That kind of hurt," he said with a pained smile.

"Sorry, Doc," Dustin replied. "Anyway, testing. One, two, three."

"Works perfectly. Just...mind the volume, all of you. The communicators are very powerful. Anyone else shouts and I just might go deaf."

"Old man," Rose said teasingly, a fond smile on her face. The Doctor's resulting grin told the rest of them that she'd definitely said something like that before. He clapped his hands together, changing the subject.

"Okay, so...back to school with you four. How long have you been gone?"

"About an hour and a half," Mike replied. "Only problem is...I told my mom I wanted to stay home, and she let me. Ah, whatever. Let's just get back, stat. Before anyone notices we're gone."

The Doctor smiled. "Nobody will notice you being gone...because you never left."

"Uh...*what?*"

"Time machine, Michael," the Doctor replied, rolling his eyes. He then asked, "Mike *is*...short for Michael, isn't it?"

"Yeah, but it doesn't mean you can *call* me that," he snapped, irritated. Mike then looked at the ground. "Sorry, Doctor. Just...don't, alright? It makes you sound like my parents or something."

He gave Mike a half-smile. "Well, if it makes you that snippy, I won't do it. Now, let's turn back the clock, shall we? Oh, and do hold onto something. Flight can be a bit dodgy."

He motioned to Amy. "If you would close the door, Pond, that would be appreciated."

Quickly, Amy walked to the TARDIS door and closed it. The Doctor turned his attention to the console, flipping levers and pushing buttons. When he got to the last switch, however, he stopped. Turning to Rose, he smirked, beckoning her over.

"Care to do the honors, Miss Tyler?"

Rose gave him a huge grin, grabbed a metal pole, and activated the TARDIS' flight sequence.

A harsh grating noise filled the room, which also shook violently. Immediately the boys understood why he had asked them to hold onto something...and they regretted ignoring him.

Eleven was alright- she had listened; and found a support to grasp. The boys, however, were not so lucky.

Mike hit the floor almost instantly, followed by Lucas and Dustin. They screamed as the TARDIS shook, trying not to slide across the floor. Seeing as they were not harmed, the Doctor allowed himself a bit of a smile.

That's what happens when they ignore me, he thought. *It's funny, they went to the floor like dominoes. Or maybe a sack of potatoes.*

As that last thought came to him, he let out a stifled laugh. Moments later, the TARDIS came to a stop. When they got to their feet, all three boys looked mad, but Dustin was the only one that yelled.

"Not *funny*, man! Your spaceship almost killed us!"

"Nah, she didn't. She's sentient, *and* she likes you four. She'd kill *me* before she tried to kill any of you, and *I'm* her pilot," he said, grinning. "Besides, I warned you," he concluded.

A sudden hum echoed throughout the room.

"Yes, *thank you,*" the Doctor shouted, gesturing at the ceiling. He looked back down at the passengers.

"She said she'd never hurt a kid- especially not in front of her favorite traveling companion," he said, smiling.

At those words, Rose giggled.

Mike and Lucas tilted their heads in confusion, and Dustin said, glancing at her, "You know somethin' we don't, blondie?"

The Doctor answered before she could. "Oh, that? Well, it's no secret that the TARDIS has always really liked Rose."

Dustin looked back and forth between the two of them, making a

mental note of all the smiling and what seemed like *flirting* that had taken place. "I wonder why," he drawled sarcastically.

"Dustin, what the hell?" Lucas cut in. "We are on a schedule here! We *have* to *go*. Like, *now*."

Amy rolled her eyes, smirking at Dustin. "Surprised you didn't say Rose was...what was it, again? Hot? I mean, *look* at her."

Lucas groaned. "Lady, *please* do not encourage him."

Dustin ignored his exasperated friend, instead choosing to smile and answer Amy anyway. "No, she *is* hot. Just figured the Doc would get mad if I said anything," he replied with a laugh. "But Lucas is right about one thing- we gotta get out of here before somebody sees us. Or before someone sees you guys," he added.

The Doctor nodded in agreement. "Go on, you lot. Just watch where you're going and move quickly," he instructed. "We'd best get the TARDIS back into the Time Vortex."

"Wait, the wh-?"

"I said go!"

With those words, the three boys scrambled for the exit. Only Eleven walked out slowly, pausing in the doorway to glance back at the Doctor. She hesitated, not wanting to leave- unlike with other adults, Eleven felt safe around the Doctor. She almost...trusted him. And he was *leaving*.

He seemed to sense her apprehension, and gave her a reassuring smile. "Go with your friends, Eleven," he said gently. "I'll come and get you if you need me, okay?"

Eleven nodded before walking out, still looking at him. "Okay," she murmured.

Once all four of them had disappeared from sight, the Doctor closed the door and dematerialized the TARDIS.

Once they were safely outside of time, Amy sighed and leaned back against the TARDIS console. "What do we do now, Raggedy Man? Split up, or...where do we even *go?*"

Rose sighed as well, her gaze dropping to the floor. "I...um-"

That got the Doctor's attention. Moving closer to her, he asked, "Rose? What is it?" His voice was soft, his tone gentle.

Rose plastered a thin smile on her face, but her reddened skin indicated she was close to crying. "Sorry, 's just...I feel so *guilty*. I left Will behind. He's only *twelve years old*, and I left him stranded in another dimension!" At those words, tears began to spill from Rose's eyes.

The Doctor met her gaze, his eyes full of pain. He knew that she had most likely become quite attached to Will; and anyone would worry about a child in that situation. Beyond that, however, she was probably reliving her own unwanted stay in a parallel universe. He reached out, his fingertips barely touching the skin on her jaw.

"Oh, Rose...it's not your fault. You found a way out, the gap closed itself before you could go back in to get Will. Could've happened to anyone." He moved his hand up to push her hair out of her face and wipe away her tears. "Don't do this to yourself. We'll find him; I promise. Now, is there...something you need? Or want?"

She shook her head, leaning into his hand. "For myself? Right now...I don't know. But I'd like to talk to Will's mum. She deserves to know everything that happened. And I want to...I don't know, apologize? Her name's-"

"-Joyce," the Doctor replied, cutting her off. "Yeah, I know. We've met," he murmured, giving her a consoling smile. "She knows where he is, technically speaking."

Amy cleared her throat uncomfortably. "Hate to interrupt, I really do. But...we're still here, yeah?" she said sincerely. Rory smiled, but said nothing.

Rose pulled away and glanced at the floor, embarrassed. "Sorry," she

muttered.

"No, no. I didn't mean you, love," Amy murmured, walking over to Rose and squeezing her hand in comfort. "I just wanted to make sure that *the Doctor* didn't forget we were here," she said reassuringly.

Rose smiled then- a real smile. "Yeah, he has a habit of doing that."

Amy, in turn, put her arm around Rose. "Oh, you have *no idea*," she replied, grinning.

Rose chuckled slightly at those words. "Trust me, I know. I lived with him for over two years, and-"

"Right!" the Doctor exclaimed, heading for the console. "*I* hate to interrupt your conversation, but we have a plan to set in motion. Rory, Amy, you two stay here. Rose and I will go pay Joyce another visit, that is, if...you still want to?" he asked uncertainly, glancing at Rose. She nodded in response.

"Good, that's sorted. So Rose and I will visit Will's mother. You'll stay here till we're done, and then...we follow the compass to the gate! But we want to keep our eyes and ears peeled in the meantime- the more we know, the better. Now then...any questions?"

Amy shook her head, but Rory spoke up. "Yeah, I've got one, actually. Why do you want us to stay behind while you visit Ms. Byers?"

"Oh, that. Well you see, Rory, she's probably...very stressed out. Better for her to talk to two people she doesn't know instead of four, right? Less, ah...overwhelming, I'd say."

Rose's eyes widened in surprise. "Your manners have improved, I see," she said, a hint of shock in her voice; though she was smiling.

"Oh, well...figured I'd better work on them since you weren't around to apologize for me anymore, yeah?" he said, smiling back at her.

Rose nodded, and while the smile didn't fade, she sighed. "Yeah..."

The Doctor said nothing else, instead, he set a course back to Hawkins. "If this calculation is correct, this should put us in the

woods near her house, about an hour after when we dropped the kids off. Out of sight, don't worry," he added.

When the TARDIS landed a minute later, Rose stepped outside first. "Well, there's a house in the distance," she said, pointing to the building just beyond the treeline.

The Doctor walked up beside her, grinning. "That's her house, alright."

"So you actually took us where we were *supposed* to go this time?"

"Rose, I brought you back late *once*-"

"Yeah, a *year* late. Mum thought my boyfriend had murdered me! Plus there was Scotland. We were supposed to go to 1979, but-"

"I was *close!*"

"A century behind is not *close*, Doctor!" Rose shook her head and sighed in exasperation. "Forget it; that doesn't matter right now. We have an upset mother to apologize to," she murmured.

"Rose, are you sure you want to do this?"

She gave him a small smile. "It's not gonna be easy. But it's the right thing to do."

He smiled back at her, before taking her hand. "And you *wondered* why I brought you along."

He pulled her close, kissing her forehead the way he used to. "Let's get a move on, then," he said, still smiling at her.

(A/N: Is the banter between the Doctor and Rose believable/in character? Also, two things: First, the earpieces are semi-inspired by the Focus that Aloy wears in the video game *Horizon: Zero Dawn*. Just smaller, dark grey, and they go *in* the ear instead of next to it. Second, I plan on the Doctor and Eleven having this sort of...parent/child relationship. It'll be cute, I

swear. Anyway, see you next time!
Edit: Did you catch my fandom references? The Star Trek one is obvious, but I also put a *teeny tiny* Harry Potter reference in there. See if you can spot it.)

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Apologies and Discoveries

(A/N: When inspiration hits, I churn out chapters like Ford churns out F-150 pickup trucks. Rewatching Stranger Things is probably helping.)

Rose and the Doctor walked closer to the front of Joyce Byers' house. Something about the place felt...odd, to the Doctor. Like something had been altered. And that's when they noticed it- a gaping hole in the front wall.

"My God," Rose whispered. "What d'you think happened?"

The Doctor shrugged, unsure. "Who knows? When we get inside, we can ask Joyce or her other son or...whoever else is here. Anyway..."

When they got to the front door, the Doctor raised his hand to knock, but hesitated. "Now, Rose, you're a hundred percent sure you want to do this?"

Rose nodded. "Oh, just knock at the door already," she snapped, feigning irritation. Instinctively, the Doctor tightened his grip on her hand. A moment's pause, then he knocked sharply on the door frame.

He heard a woman speak- Joyce- from inside the house. "Oh, you've *got* to be kidding me..."

They heard the sound of footsteps coming toward the door. A few seconds later, it opened to reveal Joyce, whose eyes widened in shock.

"*Doctor Smith?*" she spluttered out. "I…I wasn't expecting you. Not this soon, anyway..." She stood aside, beckoning them in. "Come on, get inside. I don't want the neighbors to see you- no offense."

"None taken, ma'am," Rose replied politely, entering the house with the Doctor beside her.

Joyce gave them a small smile, but there was a panicked look in her eye. "Please don't ask about the..."

"Hole in the wall?" the Doctor finished for her.

She sighed and nodded. "I, uh...got a little carried away with...something."

Rose smiled and shook her head. "Don't worry, we're not judging you. One time when I was sixteen I accidentally drove my mother's car into a mailbox, so..."

Joyce sniffed slightly, her voice cracking. "You ever intentionally take out a wall with an axe?"

Rose pursed her lips. "Um, no...but like I said, I'm not judging you."

Joyce shrugged her shoulders. "Well, if you want, feel free to. I don't care. Now, um..."

She turned to the Doctor. "I think I forgot my manners, Doctor Smith. Would you and your wife like something to drink?"

Rose raised her eyebrows while the Doctor chuckled. "Oh, well...she's not my wife. And as for wanting a drink, I'm fine."

Joyce's eyes widened in surprise even as she turned to Rose. "Alright, uh...do you want anything, miss?"

Rose nodded slightly. "Perhaps some water? My throat's a little dry."

"Okay, you two. Come on into the kitchen. You can sit down, if you want."

All three of them headed for the kitchen. Joyce went to the sink and picked up a glass, while Rose lowered herself into a kitchen chair. The Doctor moved to stand next to her, his hand still holding hers.

After Joyce filled a glass with water from the tap, she set it down on

the table in front of Rose, who smiled in thanks. Joyce then sat at the table next to her.

"So...is there anything you want to tell me, or..." She didn't give them time to answer. "Sorry I thought you were married; it's, well, I just assumed..."

The Doctor shook his head, grinning. "Don't worry about it, Ms. Byers. You're hardly the first who thought we were married. Or engaged, or dating...you get the idea."

Rose spoke up for the first time since she asked for the glass of water, which was now half empty. "There was a time when I got mistaken for his *sister*," she added. "That was just unpleasant."

"Yes; it was indeed, Rose."

"No better than people assuming we're married, I suppose. But-"

Joyce cut her off. "-Sorry for interrupting, but...did he say your name was Rose?"

The woman in question nodded. "Yeah, Rose Tyler; that's me. Unfortunately," she said with a sigh.

Joyce let out a soft gasp. "Y-You're the one...who was with Will...aren't you?"

Rose nodded, a tear threatening to spill over. "Yeah. I found him a few hours after I got stuck in that...that *place*. He was just *lying on the ground*...curled up in a ball. He looked so *scared*, so I...I got his attention; took care of him."

Rose's voice began to crack. "But when I found a way out, he wasn't...he wasn't with me. He was...waiting for me, back in our...well, I guess you could call it a shelter. I was able to get out; I wanted to be sure it would work. But before I could go back for him, I...I passed out. And then the Doctor found me in the woods. He's still stuck in there, an' it's my fault!"

With that, Rose burst into tears, sobbing uncontrollably. Gently, the Doctor placed his hand on her shoulder. Joyce, in turn, embraced

her.

"Oh, honey...it's not your fault. You couldn't have known that that was gonna happen."

Rose just sobbed harder while Joyce hugged her tightly. When she finally stopped crying enough to breathe normally, she pulled away. Joyce gave her a small smile, cupping her cheek.

"Like I said, it's not your fault. Without you...I hate to think about it, but...he could've died already. He'd probably be in really bad shape, at the very least."

Rose sniffed, and returned the smile slightly. "You sound like the Doctor," she murmured, looking at the floor.

Joyce gave her one last hug, before turning to glance at the Doctor. "I'm assuming that 'the Doctor' is you?"

He nodded. "Yeah, all my friends call me that. You can, too, if you like," he muttered, smiling to himself.

Joyce continued to look him in the eye. "So, *Doctor*, what do we do now?"

The Doctor sighed. "I have...a few things in mind. We'll find your son, Joyce. I promise you that," he said firmly.

Joyce nodded. "If you want, I could...get you in touch with the police-"

"No, we'll be alright. Thanks for the offer, though. We prefer to do things on our own, don't we, Rose?"

Rose nodded. "Yep. That's how we've always done things." She paused, sighing. "Is there anything we can do for you?"

Joyce shook her head. "I mean, I could use some company, but since you're gonna be looking for my son, I think I can handle being alone for a few more hours."

The Doctor's eyes went wide. "Rose, I just had a *brilliant* idea. Come

with me for a second, would you?"

When Rose stood up, they headed for the front door, the Doctor mouthing "be right back" to Joyce.

Once they were out of the house, Rose spoke up. "Your idea, Doctor?"

"Well, Joyce said she wanted company. We're gonna be busy, the two of us, so we can't stay. But there *are* two other people with us- *and* they've already met Joyce."

"Amy and Rory," Rose said, grinning.

"Yep! I'm sure they would agree to keep her company for a little while. *And*...if they stay here, we'll have eyes on this house. Most of the weird stuff happened around here, so using them as lookouts could be useful."

"Alright. Y'know what, Doctor? You really are brilliant. Don't let it get to your head, though," she put in quickly.

He shook his head, smiling. "Never, Rose Tyler," he replied, and took her hand.

Rose, the Doctor, Amy, and Rory headed back to Joyce's house, while Amy badgered the Doctor with questions about what to look for and what to do or say. As they got to the treeline, however, they stopped walking.

For Joyce was standing there, looking behind them. No doubt she'd seen the TARDIS. Had she...*followed* them?

"W-What...what's a 'Police Public Call Box'? And how in the world did you *fit* in that thing?"

The Doctor sighed, put his hands in his pockets. "That...um...well, it's a simple question with a very complicated answer...Rose, help me out here."

Rose let out a huff, rolling her eyes. "Ignore him. Why don't I show you?"

When the Doctor sent her a look of alarm, she snapped, "What? Did you *actually* think she was never gonna know? The clever ones always find out, Doctor."

"F-Find out what?" Joyce asked nervously.

Rose grinned. "Follow me, and you shall see," she replied.

Joyce groaned. "This is against my better judgment, but...okay." They all turned around and headed back to the TARDIS.

When Rose opened the front door, Joyce's eyes popped out of her head. "Oh my G-..."

Rose grinned. "I know. Isn't it amazing?"

Joyce nodded distractedly. "Can I...go in?"

The Doctor cut into the conversation. "Sure, if you want. Better be quick, though. We've got places to be."

"Right..." Joyce breathed, stepping into the TARDIS cautiously. "Mind explaining to me how this is possible?"

The Doctor grinned before replying, "Alien technology. It's transdimensional- the interior exists in another dimension."

Joyce looked as if she hadn't understood that last part. "Sorry, did you...did you say *alien* technology?"

"Yep!" the Doctor said brightly.

"So...are you...or are any of you...aliens?"

Rose grinned. "Amy and Rory are human. I was born human- something changed my DNA a bit. The only actual alien here is the Doctor."

Said alien nodded in agreement. "She's right about that. Which reminds me- I need to run some tests on you later, Rose. So we can determine exactly what changes to your biology occurred, and what caused it."

"I already know the basics, but alright. I'll humor you."

"Thank you, my dear," he replied, smiling at her. She rolled her eyes in response.

Joyce spoke up then. "Figures. An *alien* is the only one that believed what I said about the lights and the wall...all of it, really. Human beings just think I'm crazy."

The Doctor laughed slightly. "Yeah, that's because most human beings don't dare believe in the inexplicable or the impossible. They haven't got any imagination."

"Why waste your time with us, then?" she asked, smiling halfheartedly.

"Well, I believe- and it's been proven, in the case of humans- that every rule has an exception. There's always gonna be someone who believes in the impossible. I like those kind of people." He paused. "Plus, dangerous aliens *really* like to invade or try to destroy your planet for some reason. Earth has a long lifespan, and I want to keep it that way."

Rose grinned at him. "Nice speech, mister."

The Doctor chuckled. "Thanks. But back to more pressing matters. I-er, we...have a general idea of how we're gonna find Will. So, here's the plan..."

Hand in hand, the Doctor and Rose walked through the woods. In Rose's free hand was a compass that pointed north. They had been walking for several hours now, and it was dark- they had stopped several times to listen to reports from their "spies". Other than some noisy neighbors near Joyce's house, the fact that Mike's sister Nancy was apparently "dating a huge jerk", and Eleven supposedly helping them deal with the school bully, though, nothing remotely interesting had happened. And they hadn't found out anything related to where Will was trapped- the only possible exception being that Nancy hadn't seen her friend Barbara all day and was starting to worry. If she *was* in the other dimension, though, the Doctor and Rose knew they'd find

her.

Leaves crunched underneath their feet as they continued to follow the compass. The needle had started to spin in multiple directions, which was a good sign, in this case- the magnetic disruption meant they were close.

The Doctor had a flashlight in the hand that wasn't holding onto Rose. He could tell that there was an obstacle in front of them- a chain-link fence. He pointed the flashlight at the small sign that was on the fence.

h n l

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Rose grinned. "I s'pose we're about to break the law again, Doctor?"

In turn, he smiled back at her, nodding. "Breaking and entering; that's my specialty. The entrance has *got* to be in there. Stand back, now; I don't want to accidentally zap you." He aimed the sonic screwdriver at the fence, intending to tear a hole in it, when a gruff voice interrupted them.

"*Hey!* What're you two doin' out here?!"

They turned to see an angry-looking man in a police uniform.

"Why are you here?" the man snapped. That was when the Doctor noticed the bolt cutters in the officer's hand.

"Oh, same as you," he replied nonchalantly, a small smile on his face.

The man tilted his head in confusion. "You...you're here to break into the lab?" he asked hesitantly.

Rose smiled and nodded. "Yeah."

The police officer smirked. "I *should* arrest you, but since you're not from here; and since *I'm* doing the same thing, I think I'll go easy on you."

He paused, studying their faces. "So...English, huh? Didn't think a couple of Brits would be interested in the affairs of a small town in Indiana."

The Doctor shrugged in response. "Well, we have a...tendency...to stick our noses where they don't belong. Usually, it works out in our favor, though." He grinned.

"*Usually*," Rose repeated, giving the Doctor a pointed look. "Shall I remind you of what happened to us in Scot-"

"Oi, we don't speak of that! And that only *happened* because of your stupid bet-"

"*You're* just mad 'cos you still owe me ten quid."

Their conversation was interrupted when the man snapped, "Hey, hey, hey! I didn't ask to mediate an argument, but it looks like I'm gonna have to. Geez. Can you *please* chill? I hate it when married couples fight- especially in front of me."

The Doctor and Rose shared a glance, laughing slightly. "Oh, we're not married. We're just friends," Rose replied.

He smirked and chuckled to himself. "You sure about that?"

Rose looked slightly offended at those words. "Um, *yes.*"

He clicked his tongue in response. "Okay. Then why on Earth is he holding your hand?"

The Doctor looked at the ground, a half-smile on his face. "Oh, um...no one's ever really asked that before. Habit, I suppose? Need to keep her from wandering off."

"Oi!"

The officer smirked again. "Ah, forget I asked. What're your names,

anyway? I'm Jim. Jim Hopper."

The Doctor grinned at him. "Well, Jim Hopper, you can call me the Doctor, and that's Rose," he replied.

Hopper tilted his head, a smug expression on his face. "Alright. Doc, you, uh...you got a last name to go with that title?"

He shook his head in reply. "Nah. But if anyone asks, just say that my name's John Smith."

"Okay...I mean, that definitely sounds like an alias, but okay. Your funeral," Hopper replied. He then turned to Rose, giving her a tiny smile. "What about you, little lady? You have a last name?"

Rose rolled her eyes, irritated. "The name's Rose Tyler; but if you're gonna try to talk to me like tha', you better stop *right there*."

He grinned at her. "Alrighty then. Now let's...break into government property, I guess."

They both nodded in agreement. "Yes, *let's*," the Doctor said excitedly.

(A/N: So, we've finally reached the end of The Body! Oh, and a bit of trivia: The reason I used the word supposedly when referring to what Eleven did with Troy was because when the boys told them about it, they didn't tell the full story- they were laughing too hard to get it out. To be fair, I think I'd laugh too.)

8. Chapter 8

Chapter 8

The Break-In

Jim Hopper let out a tired sigh. Today was *not* anything like what he'd expected. Joyce Byers had been right all along- Will's body was a fake. And when he tried to get into the lab, he *had* to run into a couple of British weirdos.

Said weirdos were currently walking in front of him, hand in hand. *Just friends, my ass*, Hopper thought to himself. Only couples held hands when walking.

The Doctor was trying to walk quietly...and failing miserably. It was as if his feet found every single leaf that made a crunching noise. No wonder Rose wouldn't stop shushing him.

In front of the group was a building that was definitely a massive laboratory- sterile white paint, locked glass doors, you name it. At that moment, several scientists in white lab coats were opening the front door. All three of them rushed over to the building, crouching against the far wall. Hopper quickly grabbed the door moments before it would have shut. He beckoned them over with his arm.

"Come on, hurry!" he whispered sharply.

The Doctor and Rose didn't need to be told twice as they ducked into the building. They crept down the first few hallways, finally hiding up against a corner, their backs to the wall.

"Alright, what're you looking for?" the Doctor asked, his voice low.

"I think the people who work here kidnapped Will- he probably saw something that he shouldn't have."

The Doctor shook his head. "No, they didn't. Will is in a sort of...parallel universe. The magnetic disruption on this compass-" he showed it to Hopper "-indicates that the entrance to the other

dimension is in *this* lab."

Hopper looked at him as if he had three heads. "Okay, I want some of what you've been smoking."

"It's true!" Rose's harsh whisper cut in. "I was trapped there before. I was lucky- I got out."

Hopper let out a low groan. "Let's assume that I believe you for argument's sake. But I have something to ask you. Ever heard of MKUltra?"

Rose shook her head, but the Doctor nodded. "Drug experiments, yes. Started in the 50's. I think sensory deprivation was involved too."

"Okay, good. You know something. Well, the man that runs this lab- Dr. Martin Brenner- *worked* on MKUltra. I saw some photos- *hospital gowns*, on all the test subjects. Anyway, when we had a search party out looking for Will, one of the volunteers found a piece of fabric by a drainpipe. Sure looked like a hospital gown to me."

He paused, sighing. "And a few days before that, a friend of mine died. His name was Benny- he ran a diner. We said it was a suicide, but I'm not so sure about that now. One of the guys, Earl, said that he saw some kid with a shaved head in the diner. Trying to steal food. He said that it could've been Will *if Will had a buzz cut*."

The Doctor gasped softly as all the pieces came together. "Eleven," he murmured.

Hopper frowned at him. "Eleven? What's a number got to do with this?"

The Doctor shook his head. "No, not a number, it-"

"*HANDS IN THE AIR!*"

Hopper raised his hands, rolling his eyes. "Oh, you can't be serious..."

A security guard and a man in a suit are facing them. The guards currently had their guns trained on the Doctor, Jim, and Rose. Rose had also put her hands up, but the Doctor hadn't- he was standing in

front of her, shielding her.

"Forgot about all the cameras, bub?" the man in the suit said mockingly.

Hopper sighed. "Look, Dr. Brenner asked for us specifically, alright?"

The man nodded. "Uh huh. And who are you?"

He sighed. "It's Jim. Jim Hopper. And that's John Smith and Rose Tyler. We have a situation here."

The man rolled his eyes, speaking into a radio. "Yeah, I've got Jim Hop-"

He's cut off when Hopper punches him in the side of his head, knocking him out cold. When the security guard pointed his gun at Hopper, Rose suddenly knocked him to the ground, having roundhouse kicked him in the ribs.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows as the man slumped to the floor. Hopper proceeded to steal his ID card and gun to get through the locked door behind them. He kept the gun trained on the two men as they backed up through the door and into the hallway.

Once they were safely behind the door, the Doctor turned to Rose. "I did *not* know that you could do that."

Rose smirked at him, earning a smile in return. "Well, I am full of surprises."

Hopper rolled his eyes and sighed, exasperated. "Find the kid first, flirt later? Save it."

They didn't even bother trying to tell him that they weren't flirting. Rather, they just trudged behind him as he called out for Will.

"I'm gonna tell him, Rose. I have to. About Eleven, I mean."

"Yeah. Maybe wait till he's not avoiding us, though?" Rose replied uncertainly.

"Hey, I got something!" Hopper shouted.

Wordlessly, they entered the room that he had just gone into. Inside was what looked like a child's bed, with a stuffed animal resting on it. Tacked on the wall was a child's drawing- stick figures, a table, and some sort of small animal. One of the stick figures had the number 11 written above it.

"Eleven?" Hopper said, interested. "This what you were talking about, Doc?"

Rose spoke up before the Doctor could. "Yeah. The kid that stole food wasn't Will. And it wasn't a boy, either."

"So, you're telling me that the kid with a shaved head...was a *girl*?"

"Yes, and her name is Eleven," the Doctor replied shortly. "We've met. She's with Will's friends right now. Poor girl is on the run from that Dr. Brenner. I know all about what he put her through. I swear, when I get my hands on that man..."

"*Doctor*," Rose murmured, placing a calming hand on his arm. She opens her mouth to say something more, but is cut off by Hopper.

"We gotta go. *Now*."

They don't question it, simply following Hopper as he ran down the hallway, before going down the stairs to a basement.

What they saw in the room they ended up in shocked them- Hopper most of all. He tried to step closer to it, muttering, "What the hell..."

All the Doctor could do was stand in the middle of the room, numb with shock. "Oh my God, is that..."

He put his hand on Rose's shoulder, who had gone very pale. She nodded. "Will," she gasped out.

A moment later, before any of them realized what was happening, they had all been knocked out cold.

The Doctor woke up first, what with his superior biology and all. He seemed to be in a sort of interrogation room, with a table and chair in front of him. Rose was slumped against the wall, unconscious. And there was no sign of Hopper.

He groaned, running a hand through his hair. His ears were ringing and he had a rather bad headache. He muttered to himself, "What the hell did they use? I haven't felt like this since I got that hangover in...oh, never mind."

He reached over to Rose, who was still knocked out. He shook her shoulder gently.

"Rose? Rose, can you hear me?"

In response, she let out a grunt, mumbling, "Five more minutes, Mum..."

"If you're feeling well enough to argue with your mother about sleep, then you *need* to get up," he replied.'

Rose opened her eyes. "Doctor?" she murmured sleepily.

"Yes, it's me."

"Where...are we?"

"I dunno. Looks like some sort of interrogation room-"

He's cut off by the sound of a door opening. The man that stepped into the room he immediately recognized from Eleven's memories- Dr. Brenner. The man had the nerve to say he was her father; then proceed to treat her like a pet that was punished for not obeying him.

He walked around the perimeter of the room once, projecting a self-assured attitude. When he sat down, his words came out in a soft tone, though his facial expression was very smug.

"Good, you're both awake. How are you feeling?"

The Doctor rolled his eyes and snapped, "Well, I *was* feeling okay, but now that you're here, I'm not so sure. Rose?"

Rose just nodded. "Yeah, what he said."

Brenner chose to ignore their comments and smile at them- almost in a *friendly* way. He probably assumed he could charm or manipulate them into doing what he wanted- that possibility made the Doctor want to laugh aloud.

Rose asked a question then. "Where the hell is Hopper?"

"Your friend is perfectly fine- he'll wake up soon, I expect. Safe at home. He'll forget all about what he saw here."

The Doctor all but spat his next words at him. "So tell me, *Doctor Martin Brenner*, why you haven't done the same to us."

"I would have thought that was obvious. You're both infinitely more intriguing than he is. He's just a small town police officer who can't mind his own business. But you two..."

He paused, studying them with snakelike eyes, before gesturing to Rose. "I'll start with the lovely young woman here." Said woman glared at him as he continued. "When she was knocked unconscious, my agent was...rather careless. Gave her a gash on the side of her head. Not twenty minutes after we treated it, it had all but vanished. Her cells seem to regenerate at a rate at least ten times that of most humans."

Rose placed her hand on the side of her head. It was a bit sore, and there was a slight bump on the skin, but he was right- any injury that had been there was almost gone.

Brenner then turned to the Doctor. "And you...well, this is where it *really* gets interesting. Brain activity off the charts. Not to mention that when we were taking your vitals...you seem to have a double pulse, sir. Care to explain all of that?"

The Doctor rolled his eyes in response. "Machines on the fritz? Rose is just a fast healer, she always has been. There. That's my explanation," he replied, grinning smugly.

Brenner sighed- the Doctor could tell he was frustrated. "Very well. But keep in mind that even if I don't find out now, I can always find

out later. And it will be a lot worse for you later. So I'll give you one last chance to answer: What *are* you?"

The Doctor shrugged. "Figure it out, genius. I wouldn't try to get information from me if I were you, anyway- you see, I happen to know what you did. What you're trying to cover up. You try to torment me or Rose, I *will* bring your actions to light. But if you leave me alone, I'll leave you alone. You have my word."

"What do you know?" Brenner growled, abandoning all pretense of calm.

The Doctor grinned at him- the way he always did when he knew he'd won. "That is also for you to figure out. Let us walk away. Then you'll have my silence."

When the Doctor said that, Brenner stood up, spun around, then stormed out. Rose then looked at him like he was mad. "Doctor!" she whispered harshly. He could torture you. Or lock you up."

"Ah, he won't. He's too afraid of the truth getting out to risk causing an information leak."

Rose sighed. There was something she had to do- the Doctor was definitely going to freak out. As much as she didn't want that, desperate times called for desperate measures. She reached out and took his hand.

The next thing the Doctor knew, Rose's voice was in his head.

We're still gonna make sure he can't find Eleven, right?

The Doctor froze up for a moment. Rose was *telepathic*. Ordinary humans could *not* be telepathic. But then he reminded himself that Rose wasn't quite human anymore.

...Right.

She sent him the mental equivalent of an eye roll.

Doctor, I know you're a little confused by this right now. But I had to do it- there's cameras and microphones in here.

Clever, Rose Tyler. Sorry about my hesitation, it's just...I haven't had anyone in my head since-

-Since all the other Time Lords died?

Yeah, since that happened. You see, my species had a sort of...hive mind, a-

-A collective consciousness. I know all about that, Doctor. Your...other self told me.

He wasn't even surprised by that. He supposed they must have been close- after all, he had been in love with her at the time.

A small part of him nagged, *No, not* had been. *You're still in love with her.*

He sighed. Rose must've noticed his conflicting emotions, for she sent him another mental message.

Doctor, are you alright?

Yes, Rose. I'm fine. I was just...thinking. It's been a bit lonely, as far as this kind of communication goes. You probably already know how a hive mind works, but I'll explain it anyway. Even with a mental shield up, there's always...background noise. But after the Time War, everything was suddenly so quiet. *It was almost like...going deaf, perhaps. The silence was almost unbearable.*

Rose squeezed his hand comfortingly. She opened her mouth to say something, but was interrupted by agents entering the room, followed by Dr. Brenner.

Dr. Brenner stood at the head of the table, leaning over them. "You seem to be a man of your word, John Smith. I will let you go in exchange for your silence. And one other thing."

The Doctor sighed in frustration. "What do you want?"

"Where is the girl?"

He tilted his head in mock confusion. *Play dumb*, he told himself.

"Girl? What girl?"

Brenner narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "You mean to tell me that you know nothing of-"

He's cut off by a stern feminine voice. "Brenner!"

An older-looking blonde woman walked into the room, her heeled shoes clicking against the linoleum floor. "What the hell are you doing?" she snapped."We can't risk them knowing about the girl!"

"They are already aware, ma'am. They are simply refusing to tell me where she is; I'm certain of it."

The woman rolled her eyes at him. "Unless you can read minds, Doctor, then no, you are not certain. Just make them forget that they ever met us and *get them out of here!*" With that, she strolled out, slamming the door behind her.

He glowered at her back after she left. "Very well," he said, the false calm returning to his voice. "Security," he said quickly, motioning to them.

A few moments after being restrained later, the Doctor and Rose got themselves knocked out cold for the second time that day.

And when they woke up, they knew it could only go downhill from there.

(A/N: Hope you enjoyed! I dunno when the next chapter will be out, I'm kind of at a loss as to how to start it. Hopefully this will satisfy you for now.)

9. Chapter 9

Chapter 9

Rogues and Runaways

The Doctor and Rose woke up to the feeling of leaves against their skin and the cool autumn wind. It became apparent pretty quickly that they had been dumped outside in the woods. And it was night, although the Doctor had the feeling that they had been here a whole day rather than a short time. Whatever the agents had used to knock them out must've been really strong.

The Doctor sat up and looked around, dazed. The TARDIS was nowhere in sight, which was both a good and a bad sign. Good because that meant it was possible that the TARDIS had gone unnoticed; bad because they had no idea where they were in the woods without a marker.

Rose was lying on the ground next to him, her palm outstretched, as though she was reaching for something. Tentatively, he shook her shoulder the same way he had inside the laboratory. "Rose?"

She let out a little groan before mumbling something incomprehensible and her eyes fluttered open. When Rose caught sight of the Doctor, her lips turned up into a slight smile. This earned her a smile from him in return.

"Morning, miss Tyler. Well, I should say night, but..."

Rose sighed and forced herself to sit up. "Have we...been here a whole day?"

The Doctor nodded. "Yes, I believe we have. We should check the comms, see if anything happened. Amy and Rory are probably really worried." With that, he put his hand to his ear, activating the communicator. Rose promptly followed suit.

"Hello?" he rasped. "Amy? Rory? Are you there?"

"Doctor! Rose!" Amy's voice boomed into both their ears, causing them to wince. "Oh, thank *God* you two are okay. The kids haven't talked to us at all, and we had no idea where you were...it's been *over twenty-four hours!*"

"Sorry, Pond," the Doctor replied apologetically. "We got held up. And have I got a story for you-"

"Doctor!" Rose hissed. "Shh! You hear that?"

She was referring to the crunching noises that could only mean one thing- footsteps. The Doctor reactivated his communicator.

"Pond, we're...relatively safe, but...I'm gonna have to call you back," he murmured. He disconnected from Amy's earpiece.

Rose strained her eyes, searching for the source of the sound. The Doctor did the same, though his night vision was much better. He walked low to the ground, Rose copying him. They hid behind a tree as the voices of the intruders grew louder.

"I don't even know what to look for..." came a female voice. A male voice responded, "We'll know it when we see it, Na-"

"Shut up," came her quiet hiss. The Doctor and Rose watched as she stopped him walking with her hand, her head moving around in suspicion. "There's someone else here," she murmured.

The girl crept forward a few feet, before turning to the right and shining her flashlight directly into the Doctor's line of vision.

"Ow!" he snapped, his hand moving up reflexively to cover his eyes. "Watch it! You almost blinded me."

She dropped her flashlight in shock, but quickly replaced it with a pistol. Which she obviously pointed at the Doctor.

"Who are you?! What do you want?!" she demanded, her hand shaking slightly in what was either anger or fear.

The Doctor raised his hands in an attempt to defuse the situation. "Whoa, whoa, whoa! I'm unarmed. I had no idea you were out here,

honest."

"Wait..." the boy's voice cut in. "You...you're that doctor. The one that my mom kept talking about. I thought she was crazy, I..."

"And who exactly are you?" the Doctor asked in response.

"I'm Johnathan. Johnathan Byers. I'm Will's older brother. And this is Nancy."

"Well, Johnathan Byers, would you be so kind as to tell your friend or girlfriend or whoever that she can lose the gun? I mean no harm. I always hated guns, anyways."

Johnathan nodded before turning to Nancy. "You can put the gun down, Nance. My mom's met him. He's trying to help find Will."

Nancy nodded, lowering the pistol. She then put it back in her purse. "Sorry about that, mister..."

The Doctor and Rose stood up as he extended his hand in greeting. "Doctor, actually. Just call me the Doctor. And this is-"

"Rose," Johnathan finished for him. "Yeah, I know who she is." He turned to face her. "Is it true? Were you in that...place? With Will?"

Rose nodded. "Yeah. I'd...rather not talk about it, if you don't mind. That place was-"

"-Horrible?" he interrupted. "Yeah, I bet. And Will's still stuck in there, all because *you* didn't take him with you when you got out." With those words, Johnathan turned around and stormed off.

All Rose could do was stand still in shock, blinking rapidly. Nancy, having taken notice of her hurt, stepped closer and squeezed Rose's hand in apology.

"Sorry. About him, I mean. It's just...been really tough for him, with Will. I don't think it's personal. He's just having a hard time."

Rose nodded in understanding. "I don't blame him. I just...haven't

been yelled at in a while, so..."

The Doctor placed a hand on her shoulder to comfort her. "And you won't be snapped at by anyone ever again, I'll make sure of it," he whispered softly enough so that only Rose could hear him. She gave a tiny nod in reply and thanks.

Nancy raised an eyebrow. "So, you're called the Doctor? Just the Doctor?"

The Doctor nodded in reply, the grin back on his face. "Yep! I have a name, but I'd rather not tell anyone what it is. It's...complicated. And this is Rose Tyler."

Nancy nodded. "Alright. The Doctor and Rose Tyler," she said, before turning to Rose. "So, is he, like, your husband, or..."

Rose shook her head, looking up at the Doctor as she did so; grinning. "Third time's the charm, Doctor." She made eye contact with Nancy before continuing. "No, we're not together. If we gave you that impression, well...we only just met again yesterday, and it had been quite some time since we last saw each other. That's all."

The Doctor nodded as if to confirm her statement. "Yes, we had been apart for a long time until very recently. And as Rose is one of my dearest friends, a certain level of...closeness is present."

Rose grinned. "I'd have used the word 'possessiveness', but okay."

"I am not *possessive!*" the Doctor shot back.

Nancy rolled her eyes, trying to change the subject.. "So...you've met Will?"

The Doctor nodded. "Well, *she* has. She was trapped in the same place Will was, but...got out. Unfortunately, she lost consciousness before she could go back for Will, and the...exit sealed itself off."

Rose sighed, nodding her head in confirmation. "I still feel really bad about that."

Nancy sighed. "No wonder you looked so shocked when

Johnathan...I'm sorry. He's not always like that, I promise."

"Yeah, I figured. You said he was having a hard time."

The Doctor interrupted them. "Hey, wait a minute...are you Mike's sister? He mentioned you."

"Yeah, I'm his older sister. Nancy Wheeler."

Before the Doctor could say anything in reply, Johnathan's voice rang out.

"Nancy!"

"*Coming!*" she shouted back. She then tilted her head, beckoning the Doctor and Rose. "You guys joining us or what?" she asked, a slight grin on her face.

The Doctor nodded, taking Rose's hand and glancing at her. "Come along then, Tyler," he replied, grinning. With that, they trudged off after Nancy.

When they caught up to Johnathan, he refused to meet Rose's eyes. He instead turned to Nancy. "I keep hearing this weird noise. It's like-"

"Shh!" the Doctor cut in. "I hear it too." He held up his hand in a request for silence.

A moment later, all four of them heard it. A high-pitched whimper.

Without thinking, Rose and Nancy ran toward the sound. Johnathan and the Doctor followed closely behind. The former kept his gaze on the ground or directly ahead- especially after he caught sight of the momentary glare from the Doctor in his direction. Johnathan mumbled a "sorry" under his breath that no one heard.

And even if the Doctor had heard, it wouldn't have mattered. Because they were all now distracted by the source of the whimpering- a wounded deer.

Rose clapped her hand over her mouth. "Oh my God..." she gasped. Nancy's eyes widened. The Doctor walked over to it and crouched down next to its side.

"It's been hit by a car..." Nancy murmured.

The Doctor reached out to touch it ever so slightly. "Poor thing. It's obviously in a lot of pain."

Nancy spoke up again. "What do we do? We can't just leave it."

"Yes, that would be cruel," the Doctor agreed with her. "Very cruel indeed. Probably the only thing we can do is, well...I hate to say it, but...Nancy? Give me that pistol."

She raised her eyebrows in confusion. "But...I thought you said you hated-"

"I do, but we don't really have any other options. So just give it to me," he replied tiredly.

Rose spoke up then. "Wait...you're gonna shoot it?"

"That's about the kindest thing we can do for it at this point. It's dying."

Rose nodded in understanding, but looked away when Nancy handed him the gun. "I never liked seeing animals die," she murmured.

The Doctor pointed the pistol at the dying animal's head, sighing. But an instant before he could pull the trigger, the deer's body vanished.

"What the-?" the Doctor stammered. "It just disappeared!"

"Blood. *Blood*," Nancy replied quickly. "Follow the blood trail. I think that was the thing that took Barb. My friend Barbara," she clarified.

Wordlessly, they all set off after whatever had gotten hold of the deer.

After several hundred yards, the blood trail seemed to have vanished

as well. As such, Rose and the Doctor went one way while Nancy and Johnathan went in another direction.

Their search for the animal was unsuccessful. When Rose suggested they go back to where the trail ended, they saw Johnathan standing there too, but not Nancy.

"Hey, where's Nancy?" Johnathan asked them.

Before either of them could reply, they heard her scream.

Johnathan immediately started running in the apparent direction of her voice, calling out to her. Nancy's voice could be heard in reply, screaming for Johnathan to help her. The Doctor and Rose trailed after him, straining their eyes and ears for any clue as to where she was.

A few moments of panic later, all three of them stood in front of a tree. In the base of it was a fleshy sort of tunnel.

"My God," Rose breathed. "That's...how I got out."

"Nancy!" Johnathan shouted into it. "Nancy, follow my voice!"

"Johnathan?" came the high-pitched reply. "Rose? Doctor?"

"We're here. Nancy, just follow my voice!" Johnathan yelled.

Her voice- and Johnathan's- got louder with every passing moment. Finally, Nancy's hand stuck out from the base of the tree as she called out to them.

Immediately, all three of them worked at pulling her out of the tunnel. It took quite a bit of effort. And when her body was finally free of the membrane that coated the gap, she flung her arms around Johnathan's neck, sobbing out of fear and relief. He awkwardly put his arms around her, telling her that she was going to be okay.

When she had calmed down, the Doctor gave her and Johnathan a sympathetic glance. "You should probably get her home," he said to Johnathan, who still had his arm around Nancy. "We'll keep looking for that...thing, and for Will. But you two need to go and get some

rest," he murmured.

Nancy just nodded mutely, burying her face in Johnathan's shoulder; while Johnathan replied, "Yeah, alright."

Just as they turned around to leave, they heard the sound of footsteps and leaves being disturbed. By the sounds of it, someone was running for their life.

Instinctively, the Doctor stepped in front of Rose, intending to protect her if there was any danger. Nancy and Johnathan just watched from behind them in mute terror.

What- or more accurately, *who*- came running towards them confused Nancy and Johnathan; but shocked the Doctor and Rose.

An out-of-breath young girl, with hardly any hair. Wearing a *pink dress*. The very same girl that had been in the Doctor and Rose's company hardly a day ago. And she seemed absolutely terrified.

Quickly, the Doctor crouched down, letting the distressed girl run into his arms. "Eleven?" he asked, shocked that she was here, especially alone. She hugged him for a brief moment, tears running down her face. When she pulled away, she was only able to say two words before she collapsed into his arms again, sobbing.

"Help me."

(A/N: Okay, so I told a little white one about starting this chapter. Well not really, I *was* confused at the time. But then INSPIRATION STRUCK! Lol. Anyway, let me know what you thought in a review. Your reviews help quite a bit- they're my motivator.)

10. Chapter 10

Chapter 10

The Lost Girl

(A/N: We have reached the double digits in chapters as well as the episode The Monster! Well, technically we reached episode 6 last chapter but this is the "official" starting point. Note that this chapter is a sort of interlude- lots of monologue and dialogue, but it is necessary. Have fun, and leave a review on your way out if you like!)

The Doctor held the crying girl close, whispering soft words of comfort to her. Nancy and Johnathan simply stood there, dumbfounded. Rose, however, walked close to them, trying her best to see what was wrong with Eleven.

"Shh, it's alright. What happened, love?" the Doctor murmured to her. She simply shook her head and buried her face in his shoulder, sobbing harder. The Doctor placed one hand on her back, trying to calm her down.

When her sobbing had faded to an occasional hitch, Eleven pulled away from his embrace. The Doctor put a hand on her cheek, taking note of the dirt spots and bruises.

"What's wrong? Are you hurt? Let me see," he said, his tone of voice very gentle.

Rather than step back so the Doctor could check to see if she was injured, Eleven took both of his hands and placed them on the sides of her head.

Recent memories flooded the Doctor's mind- the boys still searching for the gate, her redirection of the compasses, the argument, the fight. And how she had run off without saying anything.

When Eleven withdrew from his mind, the Doctor's eyes snapped open and he let out a gasp of both shock and sympathy.

"Oh, my...I am so, *so* sorry that happened to you," he whispered to Eleven. "Tell you what...do you want to come with me and Rose?"

She nodded in reply.

The Doctor gave her a tiny smile. "Come here. I expect you're very tired." He held out his arms in a clear indication that he was going to pick her up.

Eleven didn't protest, rather, she moved closer and let the Doctor lift her off the ground, her head resting on his shoulder. She shut her eyes, allowing herself to relax for the first time in many hours. She was with the Doctor, and that meant she was safe.

Turning around, the Doctor faced Rose and a very confused pair of teenagers. "Alright, change of plans. Rose, Nancy, Johnathan- you're all coming with me."

"Well, I should *hope* so," Rose murmured. "They're confused as all hell and deserve an explanation. Not to mention I go with you everywhere."

"Both *very* good points. Oh, and Rose? Watch your language, would you?"

Rose rolled her eyes, but smiled and nodded anyway.

Nancy and Johnathan, however, were not satisfied. "What, you expect us to just follow you?" Nancy demanded. "No way! For all we know, you could be trying to kidnap us!"

Johnathan nodded in agreement. "Or kill us," he added.

The Doctor sighed. "I'm not gonna hurt any of you. Especially not her," he said, nodding at Eleven. "Trust me. I'm the Doctor."

Rose rolled her eyes at him again, grinning. "And what has *that* got to do with anything?" she asked, but he ignored her. He had walked a

few feet away, and was pointing his sonic screwdriver at the air- looking for the TARDIS, most likely.

When he finished the scan, he beckoned to the three of them. "Alright, I found her. This way, come on."

He started walking at a brisk pace, though careful to not disturb the half-asleep girl. All the others could do was follow him.

When they were in the general vicinity of the TARDIS, but not in sight of it, the Doctor stopped walking. He turned to face Nancy and Johnathan once more.

"Listen closely, you two. What I'm about to show you you must never speak of to anyone else. Understand?"

They nodded, although suspicious. The Doctor grinned at them, replied, "Good," and kept on walking.

Within a few hundred feet, the TARDIS came into view. Nancy was the first to speak after that.

"How the hell could a 'Police Public Call Box'- whatever that is- be top secret?"

The Doctor sighed. "The 'watch your language' rule applies to you and Johnathan as well, Nancy. And to answer your question, well...you'll see," he replied, his usual manic grin returning.

He then snapped his fingers, opening the door. Johnathan's mouth fell open slightly, while Nancy's eyes widened to the size of dinner plates.

Rose smiled at them. "You should see the looks on your faces," she said, struggling not to laugh.

Within five minutes, Nancy and Johnathan knew the basics- the TARDIS was a spaceship and time machine, and the Doctor was a near-immortal alien.

Nancy looked at the console room floor, making a sweeping gesture

with her hand. "Ordinarily I'd think one or both of us were insane, but after today...I dunno."

Johnathan chuckled. "Exactly, Nance. I thought Mom was crazy. She still has two strangers in the house- I'm guessing they're with you?" he asked, glancing at the Doctor.

The Doctor smiled and nodded. "If one of them's a Scottish redhead and the other's her husband who always frets over everything, then yes. They'd be with me."

Johnathan nodded in response. "Yeah. I think the girl said her name was Abby or Amber- no, Amelia. Amy. Is that her?"

"Yep!" Rose replied brightly, before turning to the Doctor. "I like her, by the way. I really like her. I think we'll get along just fine."

"Good," the Doctor replied softly. "Now, there is the matter of the child who I believe has fallen asleep on me. What do we do with her? Should I wake her up so she can get more comfortable, or-"

Rose sighed. "Put her on the seat there. We should wake her up, but...try not to frighten her. I think I'll run her a bath so she can warm up and get clean. After that she should probably eat something; then she can get some sleep."

The Doctor smiled at her. "Clearly, you're a better babysitter than me. I think I'll just-"

He left the room without finishing that sentence, descending the stairs to the room beneath the TARDIS console.

Rose sighed with a hint of frustration, turning to Nancy and Johnathan. "There should be some bathrooms and bedrooms up that way if you need them," she said, gesturing to a staircase. "I'd recommend you stay here tonight. I don't think the Doctor would mind. He always used to say 'the more the merrier'. And then he'd mutter under his breath about cliches being the eventual death of him..." she trailed off, smiling to herself.

Nancy nodded. "Yeah, I'd like to stay, actually. Johnathan?" She glanced at him, and he nodded too. "Great. I think I'll take a

shower..."

She turned to walk up the staircase, but stopped on the first step. "Which way to a bathroom?"

"Oh, the TARDIS is sentient. She'll make sure you find one."

Nancy looked both confused and amazed by that statement. "Alright..." she muttered, walking up the staircase and disappearing from view. Johnathan thanked Rose and followed Nancy after that.

Once they were gone, Rose turned her attention to the sleeping child on the jump seat. She tapped Eleven on the shoulder, causing her to grunt and stir, though she didn't wake.

"Eleven?" Rose murmured. "Wake up, sweetheart."

Eleven opened her eyes very slowly. "Rose," she rasped.

"Yeah, that's me," she replied, grinning at her. "You were out in the cold for a while, weren't you?"

Eleven nodded.

"I suspected as much. How about I run you a bath? You'll feel much better."

"Bath?" Eleven asked, her eyes growing wide. Surely Rose wasn't asking her to…

Rose took note of her slight panic, grabbed her hand, and peeked inside her memories. As they were both telepathic, Rose didn't need to put her hands on Eleven's head, although the Doctor had been doing that. And then she understood why the word "bath" had made Eleven fearful.

"It's not the kind of bath you're thinking of, dear. You just sit in warm water so you can get clean and warm yourself up. It's very relaxing. You don't have to *do* anything. How about this? You come with me, and I'll explain it to you. I just want to help get the dirt off and make sure you don't catch cold. 'S that alright?"

Eleven nodded again. "Yes."

Rose gave her a gentle smile. "Come with me then, love. Just mind your step- I don't want you to fall."

She took Eleven's hand and helped her get down from the seat. She then guided her up the same staircase Nancy and Johnathan had gone up- unbeknownst to Rose, they had both put on fresh clothes and gone to sleep.

As Rose explained to Eleven what a bath actually was and helped her clean up, her heart went out to the poor girl. She had been treated like a bloody lab rat- and that, in Rose's mind, was simply *not okay*. If it was up to her, she'd burn that lab to the ground herself, or die trying. At the very least, she was going to ask the Doctor about Eleven as soon as she could- might they possibly be able to keep her? She deserved a safe place to call home, after all.

And while traveling with the Doctor could often be dangerous, Rose could already tell that he wouldn't let anything bad happen to her. He may have only known her for a short while, but Rose had the feeling he'd grown rather fond of Eleven. And he was often very protective of children in general.

And when she took Eleven, who was wearing clean pajamas, back downstairs into the galley, which she explained to her was a sort of kitchen, she found something waiting for them at a table: two bowls of what was obviously soup.

Rose smiled at the ceiling. "Thank you, girl." She turned to Eleven. "The TARDIS made us dinner. That was nice of her."

Eleven simply smiled in response.

After Rose said that to Eleven, the mental reply from the TARDIS surprised her.

Apparently the Doctor had left the food out for them- she had only been keeping it warm.

But as Rose thought about it, she became less shocked about the admittedly unusual gesture. He had always tried to look after Rose,

and when dealing with Eleven...Rose would be surprised if she wasn't eventually mistaken for his daughter, what with the way he acted around her. If they kept her around, that is.

But that thought made Rose ask something she hadn't wondered in a long time: Why did so many people think she and the Doctor were married, even now? Was it possible that he still...loved her?

But she pushed that thought from her mind, not daring to hope. Rather, she sat down at the table across from Eleven, and began eating dinner with her.

In the middle of them eating their soup, the Doctor finally reappeared.

"Evening, you two," he greeted them, smiling.

Rose smiled back at him. "Hello, Doctor. Thanks for dinner, by the way."

The Doctor glanced at the floor. Was he...*embarrassed?* Rose wondered.

He gave them a half-smile. "Oh, she mentioned that I..."

The Doctor glanced back up at the ceiling, feigning annoyance. "I *told* you you didn't have to say anything," he grumbled.

The TARDIS replied with the mental equivalent of rolling her eyes at him- she knew that her Thief and her Wolf were both complete idiots. Especially when it involved their feelings for one another. Feelings they continually tried to avoid.

The TARDIS reminded him of this, but he waved it away. Before they could argue about it, Eleven distracted him.

"Thank you," she said, smiling at him.

The Doctor grinned back at her, before going to stand next to where she was seated at the table. "What, for the food?" When Eleven nodded in reply, he made a dismissive gesture with his hand. "Oh, don't thank me. It was nothing." He took hold of the seat that was

next to hers, not quite directly across from Rose.

"Mind if I join you?" he asked them, a smirk on his face.

Rose shook her head. "No, go ahead and sit down. That alright with you, Eleven?"

"Yes," she replied, her smile turning into a huge grin not unlike the Doctor's.

He didn't need to be told twice before moving the chair back to sit down next to her.

"I contacted the Ponds, by the way. They'll be staying at a hotel again tonight- they didn't want to inconvenience Joyce any further. But hopefully we'll be able to get in touch with all of them, and with Hopper, of course. We're much closer to finding Will, I can assure you."

Rose nodded. "I know. Which reminds me- I invited Nancy and Johnathan to stay the night. I didn't want them to walk all the way home in the dark by themselves."

The Doctor grinned. "I figured. Which is why I told Amy to let Joyce know that her older son was with me, and would most likely get back in the morning. Nancy...will probably give her parents some excuse."

Rose smiled at him. "Okay, subject change. Why don't you tell Eleven about some of the things you've done? When you travel and we have adventures, I mean."

The Doctor laughed a bit. And tell her he did.

To Rose, the whole evening, or night, more accurately, was a rather...odd...occasion. They hadn't sat down and had dinner or drinks together and just *talked* in a very long time. And when you added a young girl that they were both rather fond of to the mix, it was almost...*domestic*.

The Doctor had always told her he hated domestics, which was true in a lot of ways. But she allowed herself to entertain the idea that he

had missed the odd form of normalcy she had with him in quiet moments between trips. And this was one of those moments.

After they finished their dinner, Rose caught Eleven stifling a yawn. Grinning, she turned to the Doctor.

"I think someone's ready to go to sleep," she said teasingly.

Eleven shook her head, but rubbed her eyes as she did so. The Doctor and Rose shared a look when they noticed this.

The Doctor smirked before saying to Eleven in a teasing tone, "Oh, *come on*. You fell asleep on me when I first brought you here. You're tired, don't deny it. Don't worry; we'll all still be here tomorrow."

Eleven let out a resigned sigh. "Okay," she grumbled.

Rose grinned- raised in an unusual environment or no, Eleven was still a typical child, in some ways. "I can put her to bed," she told the Doctor, preparing to get up.

"No, you go on and get some rest. Unless...you want her to take you up to your room, Eleven?" he asked her haltingly.

Eleven shrugged. "Doesn't matter."

The Doctor grinned at Rose. "Well, that settles it. Rose, get some sleep. I'll take care of her."

"Fine*, fine*," Rose replied, slightly annoyed. She wasn't tired yet. And then she remembered.

"I'll go to bed, don't worry. But I'd like to talk to you after Eleven gets to sleep, if you don't mind. We haven't really had the chance to talk alone...*at all*, really."

The Doctor nodded in understanding. "Alright. You should probably change into something more comfortable, though. At least."

Rose sighed. "Okay. I can do that. Is my room still where it used to be?"

"Should be, yeah. At least now that you're back, anyway," he replied, still smiling.

"C'mon, Eleven," he murmured, holding out his hand for the girl to take. Once she did, the Doctor guided her up the stairs to show her her room.

Rose sighed and set off to look for her own bedroom.

The Doctor was right- her room was where it always had been. Directly across from the room she knew was his. And when she went inside, it became apparent that not a single thing had been touched.

Her makeup was still scattered across the dresser, her bed only half made. Even the clothes she had carelessly thrown on the floor were still there. If it wasn't for the slight film of dust, Rose could almost effortlessly pretend she'd never left.

Quickly, she put on the first nightclothes she found and all but ran back to the console room to see the Doctor.

Surprisingly, he wasn't there when she showed up. It took almost another twenty minutes for him to make an appearance.

He strode into the console room, smiling when he caught sight of her. "Rose. You feeling alright?"

She nodded. "Perfectly. I just...wanted to talk."

He glanced at his shoes, the smile still on his face. "Yeah, me too. Sorry it took so long, by the way. Eleven...wanted me to stay with her until she fell asleep."

Rose smiled. "Don't apologize. That means she trusts you. And I have good reason to believe she's just as fond of you as you are of her."

The Doctor looked back up at Rose. "I don't know about her trusting me. Although I am quite fond of her- there's no point in denying it."

"Yeah. I absolutely love her; she's so sweet. And she needs a home. A proper one. D'you know where she was living after she escaped from

the lab?"

The Doctor grinned at that. "Mike's *basement*, believe it or not. I have no idea how his mother and father didn't notice that there was another *person* in their house. A hidden pet, I can believe. But another *person?* They must be really oblivious if they missed something like *that*."

Rose laughed in reply. "Yeah, that's one word for it." She paused, her mind back on Will and Eleven. "Doctor?"

"Yeah?" he asked, his tone concerned. She seemed upset.

"Are you sure we're gonna find Will?"

"Rose, you *kept him alive*," he said vehemently. "And we know where the gate to the other dimension is. All we have to do is get back in there."

"But what if...what if he-" Rose stopped herself from saying it. She didn't want to think about the possibility of Will dying.

"He's not going to die," the Doctor replied. He stepped closer to her, so that there was only about an inch separating them. "I promise you, everything is going to be alright."

Rose was unable to hold back any longer. Sure, she had cried a bit around Joyce and right after she got back, but she hadn't had the chance to properly get her emotions out until now. She let the tears flow freely, sobbing quite a bit.

The Doctor reacted on pure instinct. He wrapped his arms around Rose, one hand resting on her back, the other on her waist. He pulled her close to him as she buried her face in his neck, still sobbing. He didn't say anything other than a soft, "It's alright. I'm right here."

Rose nodded, a silent acknowledgment of his words. She choked out, "Hold me," before collapsing into his arms completely.

He did as she asked, not saying anything for a long while. He only ran a hand through her hair, something he'd done a few times before

when she was upset.

When her sobbing had gone away, though she was still crying, Rose moved her head back, looking the Doctor in the eye. Without thinking, she gave him a gentle kiss on his cheek. "Thank you," she murmured, hugging him again for a brief moment.

After she pulled away from him, Rose smiled, telling him she'd be right back.

The Doctor nodded, though he wasn't really listening. And when Rose disappeared from view, the Doctor allowed his fingertips to linger on the spot where her mouth had been pressed against his skin. He closed his eyes, trying to store the feeling of her lips away in his memory.

Though he was almost certain she meant nothing by it, he couldn't quite shake the strange daze that had come over him. She had *kissed* him, and now it was rather difficult for him to focus on anything else.

Stop it! He told himself. *It has been* three hundred years. *It doesn't matter that she used the lights to say 'I love you'- that could mean any number of things. Rose has moved on, and so should you.*

And yet...the Doctor knew deep down that he would always, in some way, be in love with Rose Tyler.

He was broken out of his thoughts by Rose coming back into the console room. She grinned at him, her face looking much better. The skin around her eyes was no longer an angry red, although they were still a bit puffy.

"Feeling better?" he asked her.

She nodded. "Yeah. Washing your face really does help," Rose replied. "My question is, are *you* alright? You look like you're a million miles away."

He gave her a gentle smile, before walking up to her and taking her hand. "I'm fine. I was just...thinking. And is there anything else you wanted to talk about?"

Rose nodded again. "Yes. I want to know- how long has it been for you? How many other companions have you had? I'm just curious."

"Oh, it's been about three hundred years. I haven't traveled with anyone else besides the Ponds. I crash landed in Amy's backyard after I regenerated- she was just seven. It's a long story." He paused. "Anything else you wanna ask?"

"Yeah, just one other thing- what're we gonna do about Eleven? She's got nowhere to go."

The Doctor sighed- he hadn't really thought about that. "We could...try to find her real parents?"

"What if we don't find them? What if they're dead? What will we do then?" Rose asked, her tone insistent.

"I don't know, Rose. I really don't." the Doctor replied, clearly disappointed with himself for not thinking of something.

Rose sighed, a tear threatening to spill over. She had been so emotional lately- she supposed stress had a lot to do with it. "Well, I had...an idea, I suppose."

He tilted his head, curious. "Alright, what is it?"

"Well, first of all, do you still want me to travel with you?"

"Of *course* I do, Rose; you're always welcome on the TARDIS. Not to mention that Amy and Rory would probably like it a lot if you stayed." How could she think that...that he didn't want her around anymore? "I'm sorry, Rose. If I acted like I didn't want you to come with me, that was not intentional."

"No, you didn't. I just...wanted to be sure." she replied, a small smile on her face. "And I was wondering if I- we- could take Eleven with us. Provided we don't find her mother and/or her father."

The Doctor widened his eyes in shock. "Well, um...I...that...I don't know. Look, I have nothing against you or her. It's just that...traveling with me can be quite dangerous."

"I'm aware of that, Doctor. But she wouldn't be alone- she'd have us to take care of her. Plus, she seems capable of holding her own in an emergency. To a degree." She paused, clearing her throat before continuing. "It's just that...she really seems to *trust* you, Doctor. You saw how she acted when she left with the boys- she did *not* want to leave you. She really needs a place to stay, and I think she'd like it here."

"Yes, *and* she's a child. Children need stability. Not running around on alien planets," he replied with an air of finality.

"Well, think about this, then. If she was your biological child, Doctor, what would you do? Would you leave her behind then?"

"No, that...that's not..." he paused, becoming slightly frustrated. "I'll think about it, alright? Maybe we can work something out in the event that her parents are nowhere to be found. Besides, we'd have to ask Eleven if she would *want* to stay with us, anyway."

Rose smiled at him. "Good enough for me. See you in the morning, Doctor," she murmured. "Try and get some sleep, if you can."

The Doctor nodded. "Goodnight, Rose," he told her, bending down to kiss the top of her head. "We've got a long day tomorrow."

(A/N: Just out of curiosity, do you think the Doctor's relationship with Eleven is believable? And do his interactions with Rose seem to be in character for them, when you take into account their current situation? Feedback would be appreciated.)

11. Chapter 11

Chapter 11

Friends and Mothers

(A/N: And here we have chapter 11! It is just a tad filler-ish, but it helps with both character and plot development. Reviews are appreciated!)

Eleven woke to find Rose standing over her. "Wake up, sleepyhead," she said affectionately. "Come on, let's go get breakfast."

She rolled over, not really wanting to get up. But after a moment, she sat up, swinging her legs over the bed. When Rose was sure Eleven would be getting up soon, she left her bedroom.

Eleven paused, taking a look around the room she had spent the previous night in. It was definitely a lot more comfortable than the room she had spent most of her life in at the lab. And she'd never seen so many stuffed animals before- the TARDIS had left out plenty of toys for her, as well as a desk with paper and crayons should she feel like drawing.

Eleven hadn't completely understood what the TARDIS really was when the Doctor explained it to her, just that she could talk to both her and the Doctor.

She stood up and headed out into the hallway, walking down the staircase into the console room. She located the galley fairly easily, as the TARDIS was happy to point her in the right direction.

Everyone else was already there- Nancy and Jonathan were both standing around in their pajamas, bowls of cereal in their hands. Rose was setting out plates, trying to get them to "sit down and eat breakfast *properly*". She was also scolding the Doctor, who was absently leaning against the counter, a faraway look on his face. Clearly, he was lost in thought. But Rose seemed to be angry with

him over what he was eating.

"Fish fingers and *custard?* How the hell can you eat that? And you don't eat *fish* for breakfast." "Oi, it's good!"

Rose smiled, however, when she saw Eleven stumble sleepily into the room. "Morning, kiddo. Come over here, I made you something."

Eleven headed over to the table and sat down. In front of her was a pleasant surprise- a toaster waffle.

Noticing the pleased look on Eleven's face, Rose chuckled. "The Doctor told me what your friend Mike said- you really like the Eggo waffles. Don't you?"

She nodded, smiling. But the smile faded when she thought of her friends; as she missed them. Especially Mike. She said nothing of this to Rose, however- all she did was thank her.

Rose simply smiled and said, "You're welcome," before resuming her efforts to get Johnathan and Nancy to sit down and eat something besides cereal. She seemed to have given up on trying to correct the Doctor's taste in food, as she simply mock glared.

"Honestly, Jonathan. You're thin as a telephone pole. Both of you, please just...*sit down*. How about you put down the cereal and let me make you some eggs instead?"

Nancy rolled her eyes. "You're worse than my mother! Fine, I'll sit down. But I'm eating the cereal- I'm not hungry for anything else." Jonathan nodded in agreement, before sitting down next to her. "I'm not that hungry either."

The Doctor chose to speak up then. "Nancy, Jonathan, I'll let you in on a little secret: Rose Marion Tyler is worse than *everyone's* mother. She's going to act that way whether you like it or not." He grinned as he finished that sentence. Rose simply feigned an offended expression.

Jonathan's shoulders shook with suppressed laughter, while Nancy choked on her glass of juice before bursting out laughing. Eleven,

meanwhile, was preoccupied with her food, repeatedly poking her syrup-covered waffle with the plastic knife Rose had given her.

It took a moment for Rose to notice her. "No, sweetie. You don't use it that way. Here, I'll show you..."

An hour later, the Doctor was growing impatient, as was Jonathan.

"Nancy?" Jonathan called out from the front of the massive wardrobe. "You okay in there?"

"Give us a minute, Jonathan!" she replied.

The Doctor rolled his eyes. "Rose, could you *please* make up your mind? You're taking forever."

Rose shouted back, "Blimey, Doctor; you sound like a bloke who's nagging his girlfriend to get a move on! Be patient, for God's sake!"

Jonathan glanced at the Doctor, confused. "Do all girls take forever to get ready?"

The Doctor shrugged. "Don't look at me; I don't know. Maybe. *I* don't think so, but let's just...leave them alone."

When Rose stepped out of the wardrobe in a short, bright pink dress with a black belt, the Doctor had to fight back a smile.

Rose rolled her eyes when she noticed this. "What? 'S not my fault that clothes from this decade are awful."

"Pink and yellow," he replied, smirking. "And while a lot of the clothes may be a bit...well, ridiculous, I think you look lovely."

Rose laughed and fought the urge to blush when he said that.

When everyone was ready, they all headed out the TARDIS door. Jonathan spoke up then.

"I'm gonna take Nancy back home, alright? We need to talk about

that monster; see if we can figure out what it's like."

The Doctor nodded in agreement, before throwing something to Jonathan, then Nancy. "Here, take these," he said. They were communicators not unlike the ones he had given Amy and Rory. "Put one in your ear, and just tap it if you want to talk to me. Let me know if you find anything. Oh, and try to stick together, yeah?"

Nancy gave a silent nod, walking off with Jonathan. His arm draped across her shoulders as they left.

Rose and the Doctor walked hand in hand to Joyce's house, Eleven just in front of them. She had abandoned the pink dress, instead favoring a plaid shirt and jeans. Rose thought that no matter how odd the fashion of this time period was, Eleven was still a rather lovely child. She'd look just like any other little girl once her hair grew back. And if it was up to Rose, she would spoil her completely rotten. After all, Eleven deserved the chance to actually experience being a child.

She was broken out of her thoughts when a mid-size cream colored dog started barking loudly- they'd made it to the front yard.

The Doctor grinned when the canine showed no aggression, rather, it jumped around and weaved in front of them, tail wagging. He had to drag Rose away from the dog, as she was petting and cooing over it. "Rose, let's get a move on. It's their dog; you can pet it later."

A moment before they made it to the front porch, Joyce threw open the front door. It was clear she had been very angry about something, but she relaxed when she saw who they were.

"Rose, Doctor," she said, breathing a sigh of relief. "Thought you were...oh, never mind."

The sound of running footsteps kept the Doctor from answering. Before anyone knew what was happening, Amy had burst outside and flung her arms around the Doctor's neck.

"Raggedy man! You're alive!" she shouted, hugging him tightly. Rory walked out just behind her, a slight worried expression on his face,

though he was smiling.

"Yes, Pond, I'm fine. Now could you please-" he staggered backwards slightly, having lost his balance. "Pond, cut it out. You're strangling me."

"Sorry," Amy replied, still laughing. "We're just really happy to see you."

Rory nodded in agreement. "Yeah, mate. We thought you were...dead, or something."

"*I called you last night!*"

Joyce spoke up, interrupting their conversation. "Wait...who's this?" she asked, referring to Eleven. She smiled at her. "Are you lost, sweetie?"

Rose shook her head, answering for her. "No, she's with us. Long story. Mind if we come in for a minute?"

Joyce shook her head. "No, I don't mind. There's a bit of a mess, though."

The Doctor shrugged. "Doesn't matter to us. Does it, Rose?" The woman in question shook her head no, and the Doctor grinned in response. "Good answer. Now, you may want to sit down for this once we go in. It really is quite a long story."

"-And that's where Nancy and Jonathan are," the Doctor concluded. They were all seated at Joyce's dining room table, and she had been hanging on to every word.

"Wow; a lot happened while we were waiting. And all I've done is throw my ex-husband out."

Rose gave her a sympathetic glance, squeezing her hand in comfort. Joyce shook her head as she did so, smiling.

"Oh, don't feel bad. He was always a jackass anyway."

Rose chuckled in response. "I had a friend who was like that. Only difference is, we weren't together and she ended things."

They were interrupted by insistent pounding on the door. "Oh my God," Joyce grumbled. She raised her voice and called out, "Go *away*, Lonnie."

But the knocking only grew more impatient.
Joyce rolled her eyes, headed up to the front door. Her voice was still loud as she opened it. "I am gonna murd-"

Much to her surprise, the man standing at the door was not Joyce's ex-husband, but Hopper. And he raised a finger to his lips in a shushing motion. In his other hand was a piece of paper that read:

Don't say anything

Joyce was beyond confused, as was everyone else. "Wha-?" She stammered out, even as Hopper motioned for her to be quiet. "Hopper, what-"

He ignored her, stepping into the living room. When he saw the massive amount of Christmas lights, he groaned loudly. Before anyone could question him, he started removing the bulbs.

Nearly a half hour later, Hopper let out a frustrated sigh and collapsed onto the sofa. "Should be okay. I mean, I'm not a hundred percent sure, but...yeah, should be okay."

Joyce finally spoke up. "Hopper, what happened?"

He ran a hand through his hair, sighing. "They bugged my place. They put a *microphone* in the light. It's 'cause I'm onto them, and they know it," he replied, before turning to the Doctor. "What about you, Doc? Where'd they dump you and Rose?"

"The woods. Suppose they didn't know what to do with us since they had no idea who we really were."

Amy's eyes widened in realization. "So that's why you didn't-"

Hopper sighed again, cutting her off. "And does Joyce know about

what we saw in the lab?"

Rose answered for him, nodding. "Yes, she does. We're lucky there's no microphone in here."

The Doctor gave a hint of a smile at Rose's comment. "Oh, that reminds me. I'd like to introduce you to someone." Turning around, he called out, "Eleven?"

She heard him call her name, and walked from Will's bedroom into the living room. "Yes?"

When Hopper saw her, his eyes went wide. "Good God, Doc. You weren't kidding."

Eleven tilted her head and eyed him in confusion, but said nothing as the Doctor beckoned her over.

"This is Eleven. Eleven, this is Jim Hopper. Don't worry, he's on our side. He won't hurt you."

Eleven nodded in acknowledgment of his words. "Hello," she murmured shyly, her eyes intense as ever.

Hopper gave a hint of a smirk. "Hey there, kid," he replied.

When Eleven didn't say anything, the Doctor gave a hint of a smile. "She's a little skittish," he said to Hopper discreetly.

Hopper nodded in understanding. "I would imagine. She's been through a lot, hasn't she?"

The Doctor nodded before turning back to Eleven, who seemed like she wanted something. "Is there anything I can get you? Are you hungry or thirsty? Tired?"

She shook her head. "Can I stay out here with you?"

Rose smiled and answered before the Doctor could. "Of course, love. Come here."

Eleven walked over to her, sitting down between the Doctor and

Rose. Instinctively, Eleven reached for the Doctor's hand, which made Rose suppress a smile. No matter what the Doctor thought, it was clear that she had become quite attached to him.

For a few minutes, Hopper spoke about what they had seen in the lab- in great detail. He had gotten a better look at the gate than the Doctor and Rose did.

"It was like a door, but natural- in a freaky way, I mean. Like it was-"

"-Made out of organic material, but not something you'd seen before?"

Hopper nodded. "Exactly, Doc. And there were these weird bits of...I don't know, snow or something, pretty much suspended in midair."

The Doctor interjected again. "Yes. I don't know what those things were, but the reason for the odd behavior is that the doorway is a tear in time and space- it causes disruption of gravity and the magnetic field."

Hopper rolled his eyes. "Nobody asked you, Einstein. We get it, you're *so* much smarter than us. Stop showing off."

Before Joyce could stop herself, she blurted out, "Oh, by the way, he's an alien." She then clapped her hands over her mouth. "Sorry! I didn't mean to say that."

The Doctor smiled at her, waving his hand nonchalantly. "Ah, don't worry about it. I would've ended up telling him, anyway. Most likely. Now, is there anyth-"

"Whoa, hey, wait a minute; back up! Joyce, did you just say he was an extraterrestrial?" Hopper cut in, clearly in disbelief.

The Doctor rolled his eyes. "Yes, I'm a bloody alien. We've established that. But there are more pressing matters at hand-"

"-Okay, now I *really* want whatever you've been smoking. A kidnapped girl, I can believe. There's proof. But an *alien?* Come on, Doc. You really expect me to be that gullible-"

The Doctor groaned in frustration. "Hopper, no offense, but I *really*

don't care right now whether you believe me or not. Is there any other reason why you're here?"

Rose sighed. "Doctor, that's rude." She then turned to Hopper. ""Sorry abou' him, he forgets how to properly treat us humans sometimes."

Hopper smirked. "No worries," he said, before his manner turned serious once again. "There's something else, but..." He whispered the rest. "I don't think the kid should hear this."

Rose gave a silent nod in understanding. "Eleven? Could you do me a favor and go in the other room for a minute? I'll be sure to come get you soon, love."

Eleven nodded. "Okay." She got off of the sofa and walked down the narrow hallway to Will's room.

Once she was gone, Hopper motioned for all of them to sit at Joyce's dining room table. When they had all sat down, he pulled a newspaper clipping out of his jacket pocket.

Hopper showed it to them, pointing at the black-and-white photograph of a woman. "This woman was one of the test subjects on MKUltra. Her name's Terry Ives, and she claims that Brenner kidnapped her daughter, Jane; to do experiments on her. Powell and I both thought she seemed like a real nut, but now...I dunno what to think."

The Doctor sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "Wow. She's probably telling the truth; people just didn't want to believe her."

Joyce spoke up, "D'you think...that could be her mother? Eleven, I mean."

Rose nodded. "Who else?"

The Doctor seemed to agree with her. "Yes, it seems unlikely that anyone else could be her biological mother."

Hopper let out another groan. "Oh, for God's sake..." he stopped himself. "Sorry. I just have no idea what to do."

The Doctor grinned. "Rose, I'm getting a brilliant idea again." This caused both Hopper and Rose to roll their eyes, but he ignored them. "You and I seem to be good at working things out together, yeah? Well, why don't we try to get information on and contact this Ter-"

Hopper interrupted him. "Look, if you're gonna try to find Terry Ives, I'm coming with you. And Joyce probably is too. Right?" he asked, glancing in her direction.

"Well, I would, but...what about the kid? Who's going to keep an eye on her?"

The Doctor gave her a "look". "Amy and Rory, obviously. And even if Eleven wasn't here, I'd want them to stay behind. We have, well...spies, here. It'd be good if Amy and Rory stayed here in case something went wrong and we were, I dunno...in another state?"

Joyce gave him a bewildered glance. "Spies?"

"Sort of. There's Amy and Rory, Nancy and Jonathan...even those other three kids. We all have communicators linked up- all they have to do is say something. So if something bad happened and we weren't here, I think Amy and Rory would do a good job handling it- with me to talk them through it, of course."

Rose grinned. "You trust them, then?"

The Doctor laughed softly. "Course I do. I only take the best- after all, I wound up with you."

Rose rolled her eyes, a hint of pink showing on her cheeks as she turned to speak to Joyce and Hopper. "Don't listen to that last part. He flatters me; always has."

The Doctor cut in, "Well, maybe I wouldn't do it if you stopped selling yourself short. And who says it's flattery? Ever considered that it might just be the truth?"

Hopper and Joyce shared a look, with the latter mouthing, "They are not just friends," and the former nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile, Rose swatted the Doctor on the arm. "Alright, cut it out.

I'll go fetch Eleven, and then we can solve the mystery of this Ives woman."

The Doctor smirked. "No arguments from me," he replied.

(A/N: Another reference to Harry Potter! Also, I am not British, so…if I do something wrong in that regard, I apologize in advance. Feedback gives me life, so please leave some if you like. Thanks and see you soon!)

12. Chapter 12

Chapter 12

Lost and Found

(A/N: Hope you like this chapter! And yes, literally everyone but the Doctor and Rose know that they love each other. That was like a huge part of their onscreen relationship. Thought I'd implement it. Also, I use a lot of actual dialogue from the show in this chapter.)

Rose and the Doctor sat in the back of an ancient car; while Hopper was at a payphone trying to get Terry Ives' address. Joyce sat in the passenger seat, lost in thought. The Doctor was *not* happy about where he currently was.

"It's so stuffy; I can hardly breathe in here. Of *course* the air conditioning won't work properly, and- *Rose!*"

He gave Rose an irritated look, seeing as she was laughing at him. She grinned widely as she replied, "Are you *sulking?* Because it looks to me like you are." She reached up and mouthed "sorry" to Joyce after getting her attention, who shook her head and smiled.

"No," the Doctor grumbled, his eyes dropping to the floor. When he looked back up at Rose, he continued to complain. "I'm not sulking; I'm *bored*. And it's *really* hot in here."

"Must be 'cos of me, then," she quipped, laughing when the Doctor glared at her.

"You're going to make a joke about attractiveness *now*, Rose? *Really?*" He cleared his throat, the levity suddenly disappearing. "All kidding aside, I know I shouldn't be-"

"Complaining?"

"-Well, I was going to say bored, but...yeah, that too, I suppose. I'm

trying really hard to not be...oh, what's the word...Rose, do you get my point?"

She grinned. "If you were saying you're trying to not be an arse, then yes. I get your point."

At that, Joyce, who had been trying *very* hard not to eavesdrop, started laughing quietly. "You two are hilarious..." she muttered.

The Doctor opened his mouth to reply, but decided against it when Hopper opened the car door.

Joyce glanced at him, concerned. "Did you get it?"

"Yeah, I got it. You guys ready to take a little trip to Chicago?"

Some time later, all four of them were standing on the front porch of Teresa Ives' last known address. Hopper knocked on the door, and an unfamiliar woman opened it.

"Hi. Can I help you?" she asked.

Hopper nodded. "Yeah, hi, we're looking for Terry Ives. Does she live here?"

"Who's asking?" she replied, her eyes suspicious.

"Hawkins chief of police." Hopper subsequently showed her his badge.

The woman eyed them in disbelief. "You want to talk to my sister?"

Hopper rolled his eyes slightly, his tone impatient. "Well, if your sister's Terry Ives, then yeah, we do."

She sighed in resignation. "Okay, well...you can come in, but if you want Terry to tell you anything, you're about five years too late." With those words, she turned around on her heel and walked back inside. The Doctor and Rose shared a confused glance before trailing after her, Joyce and Hopper in tow.

Terry's sister led them to the living room, where a woman sat in a rocking chair in front of a TV. She seemed to be mumbling incoherent words. Her sister called out to her. "Terry? You have some visitors."

Immediately, Joyce stepped in front of the woman. "Hello. My name's Joyce Byers. Uh, this is Hopper. And that's Rose and-"

"-I'm the Doctor. Doctor John Smith," he cut in. "We're here because, well...it's about your daughter, Jane. Is there anything you could tell us about when she was taken?"

Hopper cut him off. "What was your relationship with Dr. Brenner? You guys keep in touch?"

Joyce spoke up again, "She, uh...she might know something about my son, Will. This is him. You may have seen him, on...on the news," she stammered out, holding up a photograph. And still Terry didn't respond.

The Doctor and Rose focused on her sister. "What's wrong with her?" Rose whispered.

She shrugged in reply. "I told you, you're wasting your time."

The four of them had been led into the kitchen by Terry's sister-Becky, who was currently explaining her condition. "She was a part of some study in college."

"MKUltra?" the Doctor asked. Becky nodded.

"Yeah, that's the one." She paused, sighing. "Was, uh, started in the '50s. By the time Terry got involved, it was supposed to be ramping down, but...the drugs just got crazier. Messed her up good."

Hopper interjected with a question. "And this was the CIA that ran this?"

To everyone's surprise, Becky smiled, chuckling slightly. "Terry would've gotten along with you guys. 'The Man', with a big capital 'M'. They'd pay, you know, a couple hundred bucks to people like my

sister; give 'em drugs, psychedelics. LSD, mostly. Then they'd strip her naked and put her in these 'isolation tanks'."

The Doctor piped up, "Isolation tanks? You mean like...sensory deprivation?"

Becky smirked. "I like you, Doc. You seem like you're smart. Catch on quick. But, yeah. They're these big...bathtubs, basically. Filled with saltwater, so you can float around in there. You lose any sense of, ah, sense- feel nothing, see nothing. Like you said, sensory deprivation," she replied, nodding in the Doctor's direction. "They wanted to 'expand the boundaries of the mind'. Real hippie crap."

When she noticed their looks of alarm, she continued, "I mean, it's not like they were forcing her to *do* any of this stuff. The thing is, though...she didn't know she was pregnant at the time."

"Jane," Joyce murmured, realizing.

Rose cut in, "Have you got any pictures of her, or..."

Becky suddenly seemed very confused. "I don't think you guys understand. Terry miscarried in the third trimester." She paused and let out another sigh. "C'mon, lemme show you something."

She led them further down the hall, into a small room- a nursery, by the looks of it.

"She keeps all of this up," Becky explained, as they walked into the room. "Been doing it for 12 years. Terry, ah, pretends like Jane is real. Like she's gonna come home someday. Says she's...special. Born with 'abilities'."

The Doctor was almost completely convinced that Eleven was in fact Jane Ives, but was curious as to what Terry knew. "Abilities? As in, physical, or...psionic?"

Becky sighed. "You ever read any Stephen King?"

The Doctor's thoughts must have shown on his face, because Becky chuckled. "You look a little bit scared, Doc. Well, all of you do. Don't worry- I mean, it's all make-believe. But I guess psionic would be the

right word. Telepathy, telekinesis...you know, shit you can do with your mind. And that's why the big, bad Man stole Jane away. Her baby's a weapon, off fighting the commies." She glanced at the floor.

"The doctors all say it's a coping mechanism. Y'know, to deal with the guilt."

The Doctor asked, "And you never considered that she may have been telling the truth? About having had the kid, I mean."

Becky shook her head. "There is no birth certificate, nothing from the hospital...doctors and nurses all confirmed that she miscarried."

The Doctor let out a sigh of thinly veiled frustration. "You do know that it's possible to cover something like that up, right? Governments pull stunts like that all the time."

Becky chuckled, before replying, "Like I said, Doc, you and Terry would've gotten along. She always liked the smart pretty boys, anyway."

Rose grinned mischievously. "She liked pretty boys, did she? Well, then...I think I would've liked her too, 'cos so do I." Rose then burst out laughing when she noticed the Doctor's uncomfortable expression.

Becky's shoulders shook with suppressed laughter as she turned to the Doctor. "She's got spunk, I can tell. You guys been together long?"

"Oh, um...we're not..." the Doctor stammered. "We're just friends."

Joyce smiled a genuine smile for the first time in several days. "I made that same mistake, Becky. Don't go there- he gets flustered."

Hopper smirked. "Yeah, I did that, too. And she's right- don't ask them about their relationship."

The Doctor looked very ticked off at that remark. "Oh, shut up, Hopper."

Becky finally let out a laugh, before turning to the Doctor and Rose. She seemed very amused by their discomfort. "So you're telling me

that everyone else in this room, myself included, thought you two were together?"

Rose shrugged. "Yeah," before looking at the floor and smiling to herself. "They thought we were married."

Becky raised an eyebrow. "Well, in that case, I think you both need to have a serious discussion," she replied jokingly.

The Doctor was the last one to exit the house. "Thank you for your time, ma'am," he told her, smiling politely. "We appreciate it."

Becky nodded and returned the smile. "Good luck finding that other kid, Doc. Sorry I couldn't be of more help."

"Oh, 's quite alright. And thank you." With that, he turned around and headed for Hopper's car.

Once he was sitting down, he sighed heavily. "Well, that was...rather odd."

Rose rolled her eyes, both frustrated and saddened. "You think? Jane's mother's brain is...well, turned to mush. And her aunt..." Rose sighed. "What're we gonna do with her now? And Will is still trapped in that...*place*..."

Hopper spoke before the Doctor could. "I dunno about Eleven, or Jane, or whatever you want to call her. But I know that we're gonna find Will."

Joyce snapped, "Oh, like Terry found *her* daughter? *Twelve years,* Hopper! She's been looking for twelve years-"

"-Yeah, and she showed up at Benny's five nights ago. And right now, she's safe; which means there is a very good chance we will find your son. Focus on that," Hopper replied.

Joyce sighed. "Yeah, I guess you're right."

As soon as the car was parked in front of Joyce's house, Hopper's radio buzzed. A voice said, "Hey Chief, are you there? Hey, Chief-"

Hopper picked up the microphone and spoke into it. "Yeah, go ahead."

"Yeah, a fight broke out here and-" Hopper rolled his eyes. "-Cal, I don't have time for this."

"It's Jonathan Byers. You haven't seen Joyce, have you?"

Hopper and Joyce shared a look, before the latter said, "You two go in the house. Check on Jane and your friends; make sure they're alright."

Rose nodded in understanding. "Alright. We won't be long." Quickly, they both jumped out of the car and headed inside Joyce's house.

Amy hugged them both the moment they walked in. "Where's Joyce and Hopper?"

"I think her son Jonathan got into trouble," the Doctor replied.

Rory's eyes widened. But before anyone could say anything, the Doctor flinched in pain- Dustin was shouting in his ear.

"*Doc! Doc!"*

"*Ow!* Dustin, what the- I *told* you not to shout."

"*Sorry, man. We just...have a situation here. El ran off yesterday, and we still haven't found her. And now Lucas went off to go through the gate himself!"*

"Oh yeah. Forgot to tell you, but while you three were having your little argument, Eleven ran off and found me last night. You scared her half to death!" The Doctor was angry over what they had put her through, oddly enough. That wasn't like him.

Rose tilted her head, confused. "Is that..."

Suddenly everyone flinched as Mike spoke on all four of their communicators. *"You found El?! Yesterday?! And you didn't tell us?"*

"Well, I meant to, but-"

The Doctor was unexpectedly cut off when Dustin yelled, *"Oh, shit! Run, Mike! Shit, shit, shit, shit, shi-"*

"Could you stop saying 'shit' for a moment and *tell me what's going on?!*" the Doctor yelled back.

"*It's...Troy and...and James. They're...chasing...us! Troy has a...he has a switch...blade! We're near the old quarry! Get over here* now!"

The Doctor disconnected from the communicator and grabbed Rose's hand. "We gotta go. We have to go *now*. Eleven? Come on, we have to go somewhere! It's an emergency!"

Without even thinking about it, they all made a run for where Dustin had described.

As they came closer and closer to the quarry, they could hear muffled shouting from Dustin, Mike, and two other voices they didn't recognize.

"Jump!" one boy was shouting.

"No, Mike! Don't do it, man. Is anyone there? Doctor! Rose! Amy! Anyone!" Dustin shouted.

"Oh my God, they're trying to get Mike to jump off that ledge..." Rose gasped out as they ran closer. "Mike, *don't!*" she shouted. But they were still too far away to be heard.

But before they made it to the ledge, Mike had jumped. While the others were shouting and the other two boys stood there in shock, Eleven knew what she had to do.

She stopped Mike's fall in midair and lifted him back onto solid ground. When Troy and James saw this, as well as the other adults coming closer, they broke into a run. Eleven walked closer to them even as they picked up speed.

"Oi!" the Doctor yelled. "You threatened his life! Get back here, you

little-"

Suddenly, the snap of a bone could be heard, and Troy hit the ground. "Ah! She broke my arm! My arm!"

As they recovered and kept running, Dustin shouted, "Yeah, you *better* run! She's our friend and she's *crazy!* You come back here and she'll kill you! You hear me? She'll kill you!"

Eleven turned around, intending to check up on Mike. As soon as she got close enough to be heard by him, she started crying. All the Doctor could do was watch her.

"Mike...I'm sorry." she sobbed.

"Sorry? What're you sorry for?"

"The gate. I opened it." She paused, sniffling. "I'm the monster."

"No, El," he replied, a slight smile on his face. "You're not the monster. You saved me. Do you understand? *You saved me*." With that, he hugged her tightly. Dustin joined them soon afterwards.

When they broke apart, the Doctor gave Eleven a slight smile. "You two should go home. But I've got quite a bit to tell you, so...mind if I come with you?"

Mike nodded. "We can all go to my house. If we use the back door, my mom won't notice."

And when they did get to Mike's house, unbeknownst to them, someone was watching.

An agent stood beside an inconspicuous white van, speaking into a radio. "Yeah, I've got eyes on 'em. They're heading home. But we have a new complication- turns out the Brits know about the girl."

(A/N: Next chapter marks the beginning of The Bathtub! DUN DUN DUNNNNNNN! Oh, and don't worry- the Doctor and Rose work things out...eventually.)

13. Chapter 13

Chapter 13

Run For Your Life

(A/N: Lots more actual show dialogue in this chapter. At the end I'll reveal a trade secret. Hope you like it!)

Eleven gazed at her reflection in the bathroom mirror, with Mike and the Doctor just beside her. She looked fine, but it was strange looking at herself without the blonde wig.

"Are you feeling okay?" Mike asked. "I know that when you use your powers, it makes you tired, so..."

She shook her head, one hand going to the top of her shaved head. Mike seemed to notice her discomfort, and smiled at her. "Oh, you don't need it."

She turned to look at him. "Still pretty?"

"Uh...yeah! Pretty. Really pretty," Mike stammered.

The Doctor smiled at her. "He's right, you know. You're a beautiful girl. And don't worry, your hair will grow back anyway."

El smiled back up at him, and he kissed the top of her head. "I'll be right outside. Let me know if you need anything, okay?" She nodded, and he spun around to walk back into the basement.

Once they were alone, Mike turned his attention to Eleven. "El?" he asked shyly.

"Yes?"

"Um, I'm...happy that you're back...with us," he replied, unsure of what else to say.

She gave him a small smile. "Me too."

Reacting on pure instinct, they both stepped closer to one another. They weren't quite sure of what they intended to say or do. Therefore, it may have been a good thing that Dustin suddenly burst into the bathroom.

"Guys! It's Lucas; I think he's in trouble."

Immediately they raced back into the basement. Dustin was holding his walkie-talkie, from which muffled speech could be heard. "Remember how Lucas said he was gonna look for the gate because 'we were cowards'? Well, what if he found it?"

"What's he saying?" Mike asked.

"I don't know, he's way out of range. Doc, can you *please* fix this?!" Dustin snapped. A static-filled *"...son of a bitch!"* suddenly cut through. Rory raised an eyebrow at that.

The Doctor sighed and took the walkie-talkie from Dustin. "Oh, dear...seems my modification wore off. And...oh, there we go. That should do it." He handed it back to Dustin.

"Lucas, do you copy?!" Dustin shouted.

A breathless shout from Lucas could be heard, clear as day. *"Yes, I copy! Do you? They know about Eleven! Get out of there; they know about Eleven! The bad men are coming! All of them! Do you hear me? The bad men are coming!"*

"Oh my God..." Rose gasped. Mike jumped to his feet. "Stay here," he said, moving to run up the stairs, but the Doctor and Rose stopped him.

"No way, we're coming with you," Rose exclaimed.

Mike groaned in frustration. "Oh, fine..."

The Doctor turned to Eleven and put one hand on her shoulder. "I won't let them take you away again. Understand?"

She nodded, and he smiled at her.

"Good. Now stay down here. We'll be right back." With those words, the Doctor and Rose followed Mike and Dustin up the stairs, leaving Amy and Rory with Eleven.

Strange, Amy thought to herself. *I've never seen that side of him. He seemed almost...human. Almost like...she was his own child. I know that she's in trouble and he wants to help, but it's still odd; seeing him act like that.*

They ran to his front window, and found that a large white van was parked across the street upon looking out. Mike was the first to speak.

"What's that guy doing?" He shared a concerned glance with Dustin, who said haltingly, "You don't think..."

"Oh, I think," was Rose's response. "I also think that we'd better get out of here." They all nodded in agreement. Mike sprang to his feet once more and started running, the Doctor and Rose following him. This left Dustin to watch at the window.

Mike ran into the kitchen, where his mother was talking on the phone. "Well, I know she and Steve have been spending some time together, so I thought maybe-"

"Mom!" he shouted. His mother waved her hand, ignoring him. "Well, is he home? Maybe you could ask him?"

"*Mom!*" From across the room, Rose sent him a warning look to *stop it!*

Mike's mother sighed. "I'm sorry, can you just hold on, please?"

Putting one hand over the receiver, she snapped, "Michael, I'm on the phone. I've told you a million times-"

"-Did you schedule any repairs?" he interjected, cutting her off.

"What?" she asked, confused.

"Is there anyone supposed to come and do repairs on the house?" he asked her, calmer this time.

"I don't understand; is there something wrong-" "-No, Mom, nothing's wrong in the house-"

Dustin suddenly ran up the stairs. "Mike!" "One second." Unperturbed, Dustin yelled, even louder, "*Mike!*" This got his, the Doctor's, and Rose's attention.

Glancing at all three of them, Dustin panted, "We need to leave...*right...now*."

Mike spun around and made a run for the door, leaving his mother to call out, "Michael!"

He stopped at the entrance to the kitchen. "If anyone asks where I am, I've left the country!" Mike then continued with his quick exit. Rose managed to dart out after him, but the Doctor got stopped.

"Hey!" Mike's mother yelled. "Who the hell are you guys?"

The Doctor paused for a brief moment, but then called out as he ran after Rose, "I'm the Doctor and now's *really* not the time for introductions. See you later!" As he ran through the doorway, he could hear Mike's mother yelling, "*What?!* Hey, come back!"

Eleven, Amy, and Rory were waiting for them at the back door, so they all ran out. Mike and Dustin scrambled to grab ahold of their bikes.

Even as they were running for their lives, Dustin quipped, "I'm having flashbacks to when we first met, Doc. Only instead of running *from* you, we're running *with* you." This made Amy laugh a bit.

When they stopped briefly to allow everyone to get onto their bikes, Rose smirked. "You know, I missed this part quite a bit. All the running!"

But any levity that was there vanished when a sort of army marched toward them. And at the front was a man that the Doctor, Rose, and

Eleven all recognized, Dr. Martin Brenner.

The Doctor glared at him for a tense moment and snarled, "You won't get away with kidnapping a little girl, you son of a-"

"-*Go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go!*" Dustin shouted. As they ran, with the agents returning to their vans to chase them, the Doctor thought about what Brenner had done before he walked away. The man had *smirked*. Almost like this was a game to him.

As they ran down the grass and onto the road, the screech of tires could be heard.

"Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, oh my God," Dustin said repeatedly.

"Dustin, take a deep breath," Amy instructed. He nodded as a message came through his walkie-talkie.

"*Dustin? Dustin, do you copy?"*

"Yeah, Lucas, they're on us," he panted in reply.

"*Where are you?"* Lucas shouted.

"Cornwallis."

"*Meet me at Elm and Cherry!"*

"Copy. Elm and Cherry!" Dustin shouted in instruction.

Mike nodded. "Okay."

While they were speeding down the road, no less than three white vans appeared, tailing them.

"Shit!" Dustin shouted. Mike yelled back, "This way, come on!"

Mike's alternate route took them through a playground. Dustin was in front, ringing his bicycle bell. "Out of the way, out of the way!"

"Pardon me," the Doctor said as he ran after them. Amy and Rose

both shouted, "Excuse me!", while Rory simply apologized.

Once they made it back onto a road, Lucas suddenly came into view. "Doc!" he shouted. Mike spoke up before the Doctor could, however.

"Lucas!"

"Where are they?" Lucas gasped out.

Mike stammered, "I-I don't know." Dustin interrupted, "I think we lost 'em."

But any hope of that was shattered when several vans came speeding behind them. "Go, go, go, go, go!" Mike shouted. Dustin simply screamed.

"Screaming won't help," the Doctor hissed a moment later. "Keep it down!"

"They can *see* us, Raggedy Man!" Amy shot back. "Quiet won't do much good, either!"

"Faster, faster!" Mike shouted, while Dustin swore repeatedly. Suddenly, another van came barreling towards them- they were on a collision course. And considering their speed, there was no stopping. They were coming closer and closer with every passing second.

A heartbeat before they would have collided with the van, it was thrown up into the air. It crash landed, upside down, behind them. The sudden roadblock made all their pursuers screech to a halt- this meant that they could get away without the enemy on their tail. It was obvious as to how that had happened.

As they made their way down the road, the Doctor gave Eleven a wide grin. "Now *that* was cool."

Eleven grinned right back at him. "Thanks!" she replied brightly.

Dustin and Lucas shared a look- they had never heard that happy tone of voice before. Or seen her smile like that. Privately, Mike wondered if she'd choose to go with the Doctor instead of staying in Hawkins with them. After everything was over, anyway.

Several minutes later, they arrived at what appeared to be a junkyard. When they stopped moving, Dustin gasped out, "Holy...holy *shit!* Did you *see* what she did to that van?!"

Mike rolled his eyes. "No, Dustin. We missed it," he replied sarcastically.

Rose grinned and said, "You know...the Doctor was right. That *was* cool."

Dustin nodded in agreement. "I mean, that was...that was-"

"-Awesome," Lucas cut in. "It was awesome." He then stepped closer to Eleven, crouching down in front of her. "Everything I said, about you being a traitor and stuff...I was wrong." Lucas paused, sighing. "I'm sorry," he said simply, placing a hand on her shoulder.

Eleven fixed her eyes on him, the strange intense look reappearing on her face. Blood trickled down her nose as she replied, "Friends...friends don't lie. I'm sorry, too."

"Me, too," Mike suddenly cut in. He extended his hand to Lucas, who stood up and faced him. After a moment's pause, he took Mike's hand and shook it.

Once they stepped away, Lucas said, "Okay, we need to talk about that lab. I think the gate's in there. The compass got all crazy."

The Doctor nodded. "It's in there. Rose and I both saw it."

Dustin's eyes bugged out of his head. "Wait, hold up...you've *seen* the gate? What'd it look like? Could you hear anything? Where-"

The Doctor cut him off. "-One question at a time, Dustin. Yes, I've seen the gate; I just said that. We didn't really hear anything over the monitors in the lab. Now, what was your third question?"

"Where in the lab did you see the gate? Also, are those crazies from there?"

The Doctor looked at his shoes. "Saw the gate in an underground

level. A basement, if you will. And yes, the 'crazies', as you call them, were from Hawkins Lab."

"Well, who owns Hawkins Lab?" Dustin asked.

"The sign says 'Department of Energy'," Lucas piped up.

"Department of Energy? Well, what d'you think that means?" Dustin tilted his head as he asked that.

"It means government. Military," Mike answered.

"Then why does it say 'Energy'?" Dustin challenged.

"Just trust me, alright?" Mike snapped, rolling his eyes. "It's military. My dad's told me before."

"Mike's right. There's soldiers out front," Lucas added.

Dustin gave Mike a confused glance. "Do they make, like, lightbulbs or something?"

The Doctor spoke up then. "No, they do things in there *far* worse than that. There is a *tear in time and space* inside that lab, and they've been messing with it. Not only that, but that's where Eleven is from." When he made that statement, the boys all glanced at Eleven, who nodded in confirmation.

The Doctor looked down at her. "Is it okay if I tell them? About the things they did?" She nodded again.

"They took her when she was a baby. Experimented with her to find out the extent of her abilities. And when she didn't do what they wanted, she was punished. She was a...never thought I'd say this about a child, but...she was a bloody *lab rat*."

Mike's eyes went wide and he walked closer to her. "Wow. I'm really sorry that happened, El. Is that why you didn't...you didn't want to go in the closet?"

Eleven nodded, while the Doctor tilted his head in confusion. "Closet? What closet?"

"My mom almost found her one day, so I had her hide in a closet. She didn't want me to close the door."

The Doctor met Eleven's eye. "Is that because of where they'd put you in the lab?" he asked her gently. "That little room?"

"Yes," she rasped.

The Doctor sighed. "Don't worry- you're never going to have to deal with that again. I promise."

Rose walked over to the Doctor, horrified. "They'd *lock her in a tiny room* as punishment?" she hissed, so that only he could hear her.

He nodded in reply, his voice low. "Yes, unfortunately. No doubt she suffers from claustrophobia due to post-traumatic stress."

Rose nodded in agreement. "Alright, who made you a psychologist? Whatever, it doesn't matter. Now-"

Mike suddenly piped up, "They make weapons in the lab too, right? To fight the Russians and commies and stuff."

The Doctor replied haltingly, "I believe so..."

"Weapons..." Lucas said, realizing. He looked directly at Eleven.

Dustin must have caught on to what he was getting at, because he exclaimed, "Oh, Jesus, this is bad."

The Doctor agreed with him. "Yes, you're right. It is bad. I don't know just *how* bad, but it's certainly three buses, a long walk, and a taxi from good."

Mike sighed, rolling his eyes. He replied sarcastically, "Can I quote you on that?"

Dustin shouted, "Would you please *shut up*, guys? What do we do?"

Mike replied, "I dunno, but we *can't* go home. We're fugitives now."

The Doctor cleared his throat and said, "Well, I don't know if fugitive

is the right word, but we could try to make it back to the-"

He was cut off by the whirring of helicopter blades. Everyone turned in the direction of the sound.

"G-Guys?" Dustin stammered. "Do you hear that?"

"Tha's definitely for us," Rose said, panic rising in her voice. "We'd better hide."

What followed was a lot of shouting and scrambling to hide the bikes underneath an abandoned bus, as well as taking shelter inside it.

"Get down!" Lucas commanded once they were all inside the bus. Rose beckoned with her hand. "Away from the windows."

No one argued with them. They only crouched behind the worn leather seats, doing their best to remain unseen. Dustin listened for the helicopter. "Mental," he gasped out.

As they waited for the helicopter to vanish, Mike's walkie-talkie suddenly picked up a signal. It was his sister, Nancy.

"*Mike, are you there? Mike?"*

Dustin piped up, "You guys hear that?"

"*Mike, it's me, Nancy."* Mike scrambled to pick up his walkie-talkie.

"*Mike, are you there? Answer."* A moment's pause. *"Mike, we need you to answer."*

"Is that...your sister?" Lucas asked, incredulous.

"*This is an* emergency, *Mike. Do you copy?"* Nancy sounded desperate. *"Mike,* do you copy?*"*

"Okay, this is really weird..." Dustin murmured. When Lucas went to speak into the comm, Mike snatched it away. "Don't answer!" he exclaimed.

The Doctor sighed. "Mike, she knows everything. Rose and I met her."

"Yeah, well, it could still be a trick. What if the bad people kidnapped her? What if they're forcing her to say this?"

The Doctor had to admit that Mike had a point. Dustin seemed to agree with Mike on the matter.

"It's like Lando Calrissian..." he said. "Don't answer."

"*We need to know that you're there, Mike."* Nancy's voice spoke up, persistent as ever.

Suddenly a different voice came on the intercom. *"Listen, kid, this is the chief. If you're there, pick up. We know you're in trouble, and we know about the girl. Also...if the Doc's with you, tell him to stop being an idiot and ask out that damn blonde already."*

The Doctor rolled his eyes. "Okay, most likely *not* a trap. You can answer."

"*We can protect you, and we can help you, but you gotta pick up. Are you there? Do you copy? Over."*

Lucas was still apprehensive. "But why is Nancy with the chief?"

After a few moments, the Doctor groaned in frustration. "Might regret this," he muttered, and took the walkie-talkie from Mike. "Yeah, we copy. It's the Doctor. We're here."

About twenty minutes later, everyone was on edge- but especially Dustin. Mike yelled at him, "Will you *stop* pacing?"

Rose nodded in agreement. "Don't wear yourself out."

"It's been way too long," Dustin replied. "You know what? Maybe you're right. Maybe this is *all* a trap and the bad men are coming to get us *right now!*" he yelled, his volume increasing with each word.

"It's not a trap," Lucas argued. "Why would the chief set us up? Nancy, *maybe*, but the *chief?*" Mike gave him an irritated look.

"Lando Calrissian," Dustin replied, pointing a finger at Lucas.

"Would you *shut up* about Lando?!" Even in their current situation, the Doctor had to fight a smile at that.

Dustin ignored Lucas, instead opting to shout in his face, "I don't feel good about this. *I don't feel good about this!"*

"When do you feel good about *anything?!*" Lucas yelled back.

"Oi!" Amy yelled. "Everybody *calm down*. We can't afford to fight like this right now."

Any further arguments they would have made died on their lips when they heard the sound of an approaching vehicle. Immediately, all four of the children ran to the windshield.

Instead of Hopper's car, they were met with the sight of several unknown vehicles- undoubtedly from Hawkins Lab.

"Shit!" Dustin yelled. No one bothered to scold him for cursing. Rather, they made sure everyone could hide.

"Lando," Dustin said firmly, ducking behind a seat.

"You think they saw us?" Lucas panted, his back against the metal wall of the bus.

"Both of you, *shut up*," Mike hissed.

Everyone stayed still, hardly daring to breathe as no less than three people began prowling around the junkyard. When the Doctor let himself glance out of the window, he saw men looking around- obviously after them.

Time seemed to freeze as footsteps grew louder- at least one agent was close to the bus. Squeaking from the bus door indicated that someone was trying to come in- and then the sound stopped.

Shouts of "*Hey!*" and "*What the-*" could be heard, as well as groans of pain and what sounded like blows landing. A few moments later, the

bus door creaked again, making everyone jump.

When they stood up, Jim Hopper was at the front of the bus. "Hey, guys," he panted, smirking at the Doctor. After a pause, his expression turned serious once more.

"Alright, let's go," he said breathlessly, beckoning for everyone to follow him.

(A/N: Here's my trade secret: I was writing this and rewatching the episode The Bathtub simultaneously. That's why some of the dialogue is so specific- it's directly from the show. Subtitles help- for example, I kept track of how many times Dustin said "Oh my God" in a row. Now the hard part: having to explain to my mom why I'm watching the show out of order. Oh, whatever. Hope you enjoyed, and leave a review if you like!)

14. Chapter 14

Chapter 14

Finding Safety

(A/N: Semi-interlude with a lot of actual show dialogue. Hope you enjoy!)

No one moved or even breathed for a long moment, until Hopper sighed in frustration and repeated his last instruction. "Let's *go!*" he shouted.

Everyone jumped up in surprise and scrambled for the exit. As the Doctor walked past Hopper, he said quickly, "Please don't yell at them. They've been through enough," before jumping down the bus steps. Hopper rolled his eyes and followed them out.

Jonathan and Nancy sat on the sofa with his mother inside their house. Nancy and Joyce were breathing heavily, while Jonathan was biting his nails and fidgeting. But they all stood up when they saw the headlights and heard the squeak of the brakes on Hopper's car.

By the time Hopper had parked, all three of them were outside. The first thing that the Doctor saw was a very relieved Nancy running toward them.

"Mike. Oh, my God. Mike!" When she got close enough to him, Nancy embraced her brother tightly. "I was so worried about you."

Mike didn't seem to know how to respond to that. "Yeah, uh...me too?" The Doctor and Rose chuckled at that. "You can tell they're siblings," Rose whispered. Both Rory and the Doctor smirked and nodded in agreement.

Nancy then looked behind Mike, her eyes locking onto Eleven. "Hey, it's you. The girl that was in the woods."

Eleven simply nodded in answer.

Inside Joyce's house, the Doctor was explaining the other dimension to them. "The dimension itself was likely always there. Or, at least, it has existed for a long time. The only reason you're just now noticing it is because a high-energy spacetime tear was created. Not to mention the creature that inhabits it. We tracked it to Hawkins Lab using a compass. It's underground, near a large...water tank. I think that's what it was."

He turned to smile at Dustin. "Dustin here is the one who figured out that since the entrance has a really strong magnetic field, the needle on a compass would point towards it rather than true north. And that other dimension is where Will is."

"Our name for it is the Upside Down," Mike said suddenly. "We asked El where Will was, and she flipped our game board over. *Upside down*."

"What about my friend...Barbara? Is she there too?" Nancy asked haltingly.

The Doctor nodded. "Most likely. Now, any questions?"

Amy spoke up then. "I've got one. How the *bloody* hell do we get inside that lab? You said it yourself- it's very well-guarded. Soldiers, cameras- and that crazy bloke would recognize you."

"Working on it," he replied with a sigh. "Anyone else?"

Nancy nodded. "Do you know what kind of creature lives in that other dimension?"

The Doctor sighed again. "I might. There are several different predatory creatures that exist in dimensions parallel to our own. To figure out what it is specifically, I'd need more information."

Dustin piped up, "Oh, we've been calling it the Demogorgon. Like in-"

"-Let me guess, Dungeons and Dragons?" Rose interrupted him. "I know all about that. Thanks to what Will said. That, and I tried to

play it once when I was a kid, but...ah, never mind. 'S not important."

Joyce suddenly turned to Eleven. "Is there any way that you could reach Will? That you could talk to him in this-"

"The Upside Down," Eleven replied.

"There. Yeah," Joyce said softly. Eleven nodded in answer to her question.

"And Barbara?" Nancy asked. "Can you find her, too?"

"Yes."

Eleven sat at Joyce's kitchen table, a walkie-talkie and a photograph of Barb in front of her. She was concentrating as hard as possible, her eyes closed; but only static could be heard.

The volume of it increased briefly, but still no sound emitted. A few moments later, the kitchen lights flickered out for a few seconds before coming back on. The static from the walkie-talkie died out, and Eleven opened her eyes.

"I'm sorry," she said, her voice barely a whisper.

Joyce stammered, "W-What? What's wrong? What hap...what happened?"

That was when Eleven's voice broke, and her face revealed how distressed she was. "I can't find them," she got out.

Rose walked over to the side of the table, bending down to meet her eye. "Hey," she murmured gently, taking her hand. "Don't get upset. You tried your best. It's not your fault, sweetheart."

Eleven said nothing in response. Rather, she hugged Rose tightly.

The Doctor allowed himself to look at Rose for a moment. He had almost forgotten how kind and gentle she was. But things like this made him realize that it was no wonder she had been able to help him deal with his own pain all those years ago. And she almost

seemed to be acting like she was Eleven's...mother.

He wondered if Rose had had children in the parallel universe. With her age and circumstances, it was definitely possible. And…he didn't really want to admit it, but if he himself had been given the opportunity to have children with her, he very likely would have. And he left her with a clone of himself, who had the same feelings and memories as him.

The Doctor was broken out of those thoughts by the sound of Eleven's footsteps. She had pulled away from Rose and walked off towards the bathroom to wash her face.

Rose turned her attention to him, a small smile on her face. "You alright there, Doctor?" Her tone of voice told him that she was actually concerned.

"I'm fine," he replied easily. "Just a bit...distracted, today."

Dustin rolled his eyes. "He means that *you're* distracting him, Rose. Because you're hot. Oh, *and* it's obvious that he likes you."

"I never said or did *anything* to indicate that," the Doctor put in quickly, irritated.

Hopper grinned at that. "Oh, really?"

"Wipe that look *off of your face*," the Doctor snapped at him. Rose put her hand over her mouth to keep from smiling and laughing. Amy, however, lapsed into giggling.

Mike groaned in frustration. "Can you guys *please* have that conversation some other time? We need to help El."

"H-How do we help her?" Joyce asked.

Mike replied, "Well, whenever she uses her powers, she gets weak." Dustin added, "The more energy she uses, the more tired she gets."

Lucas continued explaining. "Like, she flipped a van earlier," he said with a tilt of his head.

"It was *awesome*," Dustin put in for emphasis.

Mike sighed. "But she's drained."

"-Like a bad battery," Dustin clarified.

"Well, how do...how do we make her *better?*" Joyce asked. She was desperate to find her son.

"We don't. We just have to wait and try again," Mike replied.

"Well, *how long?*" Nancy persisted.

Mike sighed again. "I don't know."

Eleven's voice suddenly cut in, still barely above a whisper. "The bath."

"What?"Joyce replied, confused.

"I can find them. In the bath," Eleven responded.

Rose sprang to her feet. "Are you talking about…?"

A nod gave Rose her answer. The Doctor, however, was almost as confused as everyone else. "The bath? What's that mean?"

Rose answered for her. "That's what she calls a part of the experiments they did. I saw it in her mem-"

"In her memories? But you-"

"You know better than anyone else in this room that I'm telepathic! Don't think that you're the only one who's seen some of her memories."

The Doctor nodded, though still slightly shocked. "I still don't understand what made you this way. The changes in your biology, I mean."

"Doctor, I *looked into the heart of the TARDIS*. I had control over the Time Vortex! And that power was in me for almost...five minutes? You had it in you for about ten seconds and it *killed you*. All I did was

pass out. D'you *really think* I could've been completely human after that?"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa!" That was Hopper. "*Enough*. This has nothing to do with finding them. So, what did she mean?"

"The 'bath', as she calls it, was a sensory deprivation chamber. Inside that chamber, Eleven would go into a deep psychic state. From there, she could locate a person, mentally, from almost anywhere," Rose replied. "Any sort of radio would pick up on whatever that other person was saying." She turned to Eleven. "You really want to do that again?"

"Yes," she replied.

Dustin jumped to his feet. "I'm calling Mr. Clarke!" Before he did anything, however, he paused and turned to Rose. "Can you tell us more about what happened to you? Like...why you're not human? Or at least what differences there are?"

Rose nodded. "Just briefly. Listen closely, Doctor. You wanted to know about this." She cleared her throat before continuing.

"'S like I'm...part Time Lord or something. I heal faster. I don't age- I mean, look at me. I look about twenty or twenty-five, *maybe* thirty. But guess what? I'm three 'undred years old! When I die, which *has* happened, mind you, I wake up after a minute. My mind works more quickly. I'm a little less sensitive to extreme temperatures. I could go on, but there's not a lot of time."

"Okay. Wow. Uh...what power did you have?"

"It's...rather hard to explain. I could see every single timeline that ever existed. All that is, all that was...all that ever could be." Rose had a strange vacant look in her eye as she said that last sentence. "I disintegrated a bunch of aliens that were trying to destroy Earth. Oh, and I brought a friend of mine back from the dead."

The Doctor grinned. "Told you she was brilliant."

Dustin, Lucas, and Mike's mouths were wide open. "Holy shit..." Dustin gasped. "But why'd the Doc have that power for a few

seconds? And it *killed* him? But you *lived?* Awesome!"

Rose sighed. "If he hadn't taken it out of me and put it back where it belonged, that power would've killed me. Any other questions? If you've got 'em, make it quick."

Dustin shook his head, though he suddenly turned to glance at something in the living room. "Uh...j-just a couple. Number one: What the hell is Bad Wolf and why is it painted on Mrs. Byers' living room wall?"

Rose and the Doctor both suddenly turned pale enough to pass for marble statues. "*What?*" Rose gasped, running into the living room; with the Doctor at her side. Confused, everyone else followed them.

Where the alphabet on the wall had once been were two words in black paint, the same as the other letters had been.

BAD WOLF

"A message..." Rose murmured. "A message to lead myself here."

"Well, what does *that* mean?" Dustin asked.

Rose shrugged. "Something I said when I had that power. 'I take the words, I scatter them in time and space. A message to lead myself here'. Bad Wolf was...well, it was me." For a brief moment, Dustin swore that Rose's eyes flashed gold.

Stepping closer to the wall, Rose placed her palm on the painted words. When she removed it, the words *Bad Wolf* faded away. In its place was the alphabet Joyce had painted on the wall.

Dustin's eyes bugged out of his head. "*Holy*...how'd you *do* that?!" Eleven also seemed to be watching her with great interest.

Rose shrugged her shoulders again. "I don't know. It was like...there was a whisper, in my head...that told me to do it. So I did."

The Doctor moved closer to Rose, so that he was standing directly in front of her. He took one of her hands in his own. He whispered softly, "Rose Marion Tyler, you impossible thing...we *really* need to

figure this out."

Amy suddenly spoke up, "Oh, so her middle name's *Marion*, is it?" She broke into a grin. "Any particular reason you know that?"

Rose rolled her eyes. "I know what you're thinking, *Pond*, and believe me, it is *not* that. Mind out of the gutter, if you please. He knows 'cos I told him. I lived with him for two years; 's perfectly logical for that to come up. He *asked*."

"Yeah, well, I've known him just as long, if not longer, and he's never asked *me*," Amy shot back, though her tone wasn't angry. More...teasing.

Dustin suddenly interrupted, "One final question, and then we get back to work. Rose, how'd the Doctor take that power out of you?"

Rose smirked and gave the Doctor a pointed look before turning to Dustin. "He thinks I don't remember, but I do. He just told himself that so we could avoid talking about it."

Joyce rolled her eyes then, clearly impatient. "What'd he do?"

"Kissed me," Rose replied with a grin. She then turned to face the Doctor, who was looking rather uncomfortable. She winked at him before glancing back in Joyce's direction. "Dunno why he's so shy about it," she said, laughing. Rose made eye contact with the Doctor before continuing, "After all, you're a *very* good kisser. Even if you only did do it to keep me from dying."

With that, she walked back into the kitchen. "We'd better figure out how to build a sensory deprivation chamber," Rose called out over her shoulder. Joyce, Amy, Rory, Mike, and Lucas followed her.

"Calling Mr. Clarke *right now!* He's our science teacher, he'd know." Dustin exclaimed, running for the rotary phone. As he grabbed the receiver, he turned to face the Doctor. "Psst! Doc, come here!" he hissed.

Sighing in frustration, the Doctor moved closer to Dustin. "What?"

Dustin leaned close to his ear before whispering, "You do realize what

just happened, right? I'm like 99% sure that Rose just *hit on you*," he replied, his expression serious. "She's totally into you, man. And I know you're in denial, but it's obvious that you like her. You want my advice?"

"No, not particularly. I-"

"-I'm giving you advice anyway. Just four words, Doc. *Four simple words.* Listen closely: *do not blow it.* There. That's my advice. Or 'don't blow it', but that's three words, even though it's essentially the same thing-"

"-Oi, can we please *focus*, Dustin? Science teacher?"

"Wait, you don't know how to build a-"

"No, I don't know how to build a sensory deprivation tank! That's never come up before, *ever*. So just...call your teacher, please?" With that, he walked back into the kitchen where everyone else was waiting.

When he sat down at the table, he (and everyone else) could overhear Dustin's rather awkward conversation with his teacher.

"Yeah, it's just...I have a science question..."

"Do you know anything about sensory deprivation tanks? Specifically how to build one?"

A rather confused *"W-What is this for?"* could be heard on the other end.

"Uh...fun," Dustin replied.

A few moments later, everyone fought to keep from laughing as Dustin tried to guilt his teacher. This concluded with, "*Why* are you keeping this curiosity door locked?"

Soon enough, Dustin was writing down Mr. Clarke's instructions in a notebook. "Uh huh. Uh huh. *How* much?"

A brief pause. "Uh huh. Yep, alright. Yeah, we'll be careful. *Definitely*. Yeah, alright, Mr. Clarke. Yeah, I'll see you on Monday. I'll see you on Monday, Mr. Clarke. Bye," Dustin said before hanging up the phone.

Once he disconnected from the call, he looked up at Joyce, pointing his pencil in her direction. "Do you still have that kiddie pool we bobbed for apples in?"

Joyce nodded slowly. "I think so, yeah."

"Good, then we just need salt. Lots of it," Dustin replied, giving everyone a pointed look.

Hopper turned to look at him. "How much is 'lots'?"

Dustin glanced back down at the notebook. "1,500 pounds."

Nancy raised her eyebrows, a bewildered expression on her face. "Well, where are we gonna get that much salt?"

Hopper sighed in frustration. "I happen to know where."

The Doctor grabbed ahold of yet another bag of deicing salt inside the middle school supply room. He was almost afraid that he would fall down or drop one of the bags. Or both. Suddenly, another thought came to him. "Hey, what'll happen if it snows?"

Hopper rolled his eyes. "Worst case, no school."

"Even if we find Will in there...how do we get him out? And I still don't know what creature is lurking in there." The Doctor glanced at the floor as he said this. "Right now, I don't know what to do. And I *really* don't like not knowing."

Hopper sighed. "Uncertainty is normal for humans. And I don't care that you're not human. I mean, nobody can know *everything*; whether they're human or alien or...whatever."

The Doctor sighed. "So you *do* believe me."

"Few years ago, I wouldn't have. But things have changed.

Obviously," Hopper replied, looking down at his shoes. "I don't know what's possible and what isn't anymore."

"Yeah, me either," the Doctor said with a grin.

Another eye roll from Hopper. "If that statement has to do with Rose, I'm gonna shoot you."

"Please don't. It does, at least partially. I thought I'd never see her again; because crossing universes was impossible. And yet, here she is. The Bad Wolf is back where she belongs," the Doctor murmured, half to himself.

Hopper made a slight disgusted noise. "I'm not even gonna ask. Just...save the love confession, alright? Don't tell *me* you love Rose, tell *her*."

The Doctor said nothing in reply; only caught the next bag of salt Hopper threw at him.

Meanwhile in the school gymnasium, Dustin and Lucas were trying to set up the kiddie pool, with help from Amy and Rory.

"This damn thing is heavy..." Dustin grunted as he moved the deflated pool across the floor.

Amy gave him a concerned glance. "I could help you move-"

"No, Amy. I have to do this *by myself,* like a man," he replied, giving her a pointed look. Lucas and Amy rolled their eyes while Rory grinned.

"Boys," Amy muttered under her breath.

Nancy pushed a wheelbarrow full of hosepipes towards the gym. She had been conversing with Mike for a few minutes.

"Hey...no more secrets, okay? From now on we tell each other *everything*," she told him firmly.

Mike shrugged nonchalantly. "Okay. Do you like Jonathan now?"

"What? No. No, it's...it's not...it's not like that," Nancy stammered, shaking her head. Mike pursed his lips and nodded, accepting her answer.

Nancy then gave Mike a pointed look. "Do you like Eleven?"

He nearly recoiled at that question. "What? No! Ew! Gross."

Nancy furrowed her brow, smiling to herself. "Tell you what, though. Rose and the Doctor..." she smirked at Mike.

He gave her a confused glance. "Uh, what about them?"

She rolled her eyes, grinning at the fact that he missed the obvious. "Don't you think they like each other?"

"Eh, I guess? I dunno. It'd be kind of gross if they do."

"Why?"

He glared at her. "*Because*. She's human; he's an *alien*. They're not the same species."

Nancy laughed. "Who cares? I've seen the way they act around each other. It's actually pretty sweet. The Doctor's so *nice* to her." She smiled to herself, which Mike noticed, and he groaned.

"Seems like *you're* the one who likes him."

She shrugged, grinning. "I *do* like him. Sort of."

Mike made a "yuck" noise, and Nancy rolled her eyes. "*What?* I know you probably don't want to hear this, but I think he's cute, okay? A little...nerdy for my taste, and I know he's off-limits; but still. Like I said, he's actually *nice*. So yeah, I can't help but be attracted-"

"-Okay, too much information," Mike cut in. "Stop talking *right now* before it gets weird."

Nancy smirked. "Suit yourself, little brother." Mike rolled his eyes.

Joyce and Rose sat inside the science lab, Eleven across from them. Joyce handed Eleven a pair of safety goggles covered in duct tape. "This will keep it dark for you. Just like in your bathtub," Joyce explained.

Rose gave Eleven a comforting smile and squeezed her hand reassuringly. "You're really brave. You know that, right?"

Joyce nodded in agreement. "Everything you're doing for my boy...for Will...for my family..." she paused, sighing. "Thank you."

Rose and Joyce both met Eleven's eye as the latter took Eleven's hands in her own. "Listen. We are gonna be there with you the whole time. And if it ever gets too scary...in that place, you just let us know, okay?"

"Yes," Eleven murmured.

Rose put one hand on the girl's cheek. "Are you ready to do this, love?"

Eleven sighed deeply before nodding. "Ready."

(A/N: Not the best chapter imo, but the cutoff point felt right. I'll upload the next chapter ASAP. And *that* is when everything starts to happen. See you next time!)

15. Chapter 15

Chapter 15

Boundaries of the Mind

Once the small pool had been filled with saltwater, Mike set his walkie-talkie down on a chair, activating it. Loud static filled the room as Eleven removed her socks, shoes, and Mike's watch.

Eleven then put the duct tape covered safety goggles over her eyes. She sighed deeply as Rose put a hand on her back. "You're gonna be just fine, don't worry. We'll be right here."

Nodding in silent acknowledgment of those words, Eleven stepped into the pool.

The Doctor and Rose sat closest to her as she lowered her body into the water. A moment later, the electricity inside the gym surged briefly, before the lights died out.

For the next few moments, all was quiet. The only sound that could be heard was Eleven breathing heavily. She broke the silence, however, when she spoke a person's name.

"Barb?" she whispered softly. "Barbara?" Nancy leaned forward in concern and interest.

Suddenly, Eleven's breathing grew more labored, and the floodlights flickered once more.

Nancy spoke up quickly. "What's going on?"

"I don't know," Mike replied. "Doctor?"

"I have no idea," the Doctor murmured in answer.

Nancy's voice grew more panicked as she leaned down to talk to Eleven. "Is Barb okay? Is she okay?"

"Gone," Eleven suddenly got out. Nancy clapped one hand over her mouth in grief and horror as Eleven continued to repeat that word.

"Gone. Gone!" Eleven cried out, clearly terrified. On instinct, Rose grabbed her hand. "Hey, it's okay. We're right here, love. I'm right here."

The Doctor took her other hand and murmured to her, "Don't be afraid. I've got you. You're safe. It's okay."

A moment later, Eleven's breathing slowed. She let go of Rose's hand, but kept her other hand close to the Doctor's.

"Castle Byers," she suddenly got out. Joyce gasped in shock, and Rose covered her mouth with her hand. "Will?" Eleven rasped.

"Tell him...tell him I'm coming. Mom is coming," Joyce stammered. Rose nodded. "Tell him that I'm here too."

Eleven said softly, "Your mom...she's coming for you. And Rose."

Suddenly, a weak voice could be heard on the radio. "Hurry," Will moaned. "Hurry."

"Oh my God, he sounds so much worse," Rose cried out, before collapsing into sobs. The Doctor sighed and put his hand on her shoulder. "It'll be okay, Rose," he murmured.

"You tell him to...to stay where he is. Tell him that we're coming. We're coming, honey," Joyce nearly shouted to Eleven, her voice desperate.

Eleven suddenly spoke up. "Just...just hold on a little longer. Will. Will? Will!"

Instead of hearing Will's voice on the walkie-talkie, whimpering emitted from the speaker- Eleven. An instant later, she sat up, removing the goggles from her face.

The Doctor hugged her tightly as she started sobbing. "Shh…it's okay. You're okay, Eleven."

Rose also moved closer, wrapping an arm around her. "You did so good," Rose murmured. "You're so brave, sweetheart."

Eleven said nothing in reply, only clung to both of them tightly.

The Doctor sat next to Eleven, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin on the bleachers, both a towel and his tweed coat draped across Eleven's shoulders. She leaned into him, her face against his side. "Thank you," she whispered.

He smiled, putting an arm around her. "You did a good job, kid. That couldn't have been easy, but you did it anyway." The Doctor pressed a kiss to the top of her head. "You know, I've been thinking. Maybe when all this is over, you could come with me. And Rose, Amy, and Rory, of course. I'll take care of you- if you want me to."

She looked up at him, her eyes curious. "What about...my friends?"

"Don't worry, you could visit them as much as you like," he said brightly, nodding at Mike, Lucas, and Dustin. "We'd just have to be careful."

He paused, clearing his throat. "We can talk about it later. For now, we need to find Will."

Hopper, meanwhile, was conversing with Joyce. "This fort...where is it?"

"Uh, it's in the woods, behind our house."

Jonathan added, "Yeah, he used to go there to hide." With that, Hopper exited the school through a side door, Joyce and Jonathan trailing after him.

Amy suddenly turned to her husband. "I'm worried about the Doctor. He's acting weird," she whispered.

Rory sighed. "Amy, he's trying to help a little girl that has nowhere to go. And then there's Rose. Of course he's acting differently- he's doing his best to be kind to Eleven, and..."

"And?" Amy persisted, her voice stern.

"I think he might be in love with Rose. I mean, you saw the same thing I did in the lights- she said 'I love you'. And he hasn't been quite the same since."

Amy sighed, shrugging her shoulders. "I suppose you have a point. But what I don't understand is-"

She was cut off by the sound of the side door opening and Jonathan walking back in. He said nothing to them, however, only walked through the door to the hallway where Nancy was. The Doctor and Rose shared a look and followed him out.

Once they reached the two teenagers, Nancy sighed and glanced up at them. "There's something I'm gonna say that you may not like," she said, giving the Doctor a pointed look. He shrugged and replied, "I'm used to that, so just go ahead and say it."

"We have to go back to the police station. It's where all the stuff Jonathan and I bought is."

"What?" Jonathan suddenly stammered out. "Why?"

She turned to look at him. "Your mom and Hopper are just walking in there like bait. That *thing* is still in there. And we can't just sit here and let it get them, too. We can't."

The Doctor nodded in agreement. "Don't worry, we'll help you. We just need to know what you know. Nancy, I know this is a lot to ask, but...I need you to think back to when you were inside the other dimension. Did you get a good look at the creature?"

Nancy nodded, her gaze dropping to the floor. "Sort of."

"Can you tell me what it looked like? Did it walk on four legs or two?"

"Two," she replied. "It had really long, thin, arms and legs. Its hands were like claws. I think it had gray skin. Maybe green. I couldn't really tell; it was dark." She let out a shuddering breath, after which

Jonathan took her hand. "It's okay, Nancy."

She pushed him away, forcing herself to look back up at the Doctor. "It didn't have a face. When it made noise, it was like its whole head opened up, and-"

"-Alright, that's enough. Thank you, Nancy," the Doctor murmured. "Just...one other thing. When its head opened up, did it look like...I don't know, a flower? Venus flytrap? Something with-"

"-Petals, maybe," Nancy replied. "Or a Venus flytrap. Or both. And...it's just a theory, but we think blood draws it. Like a shark."

The Doctor let out a sigh, glancing at the floor. "Well *that's* just great," he drawled sarcastically. "I know exactly what sort of creature this is, and it is *not good*. Just to give you an idea; think of how bad things could possibly be, and then add another suitcase of bad."

"Well, what is it?" Jonathan asked.

"A member of a race that died out when mine did. It, like me, is most likely the last of its species. Unless some others survived, which would be even worse. Its species was contained in pocket universes a long time ago due to their bloodthirsty nature. If it hadn't been for that, many advanced species would have died out, humans included. They were forbidden from hunting any humanoid creature. So, this last one is either out for revenge, starving, or both. Probably both."

"What's it called? Do you know?" Nancy asked.

The Doctor sighed, looking down at his shoes, up at the ceiling, and then back at Nancy. "My people, the Time Lords, always called them Shadow-Walkers. An apt name, for they both lived and hunted in the shadows. Prey almost never saw them coming."

Jonathan raised an eyebrow. "Well, *that's* comforting."

Nancy then turned to Jonathan, her voice firm. "I want to finish what we started. I want to kill it."

The Doctor cut in suddenly, "Look, I try to avoid killing whenever possible. Although, in this case...that species did so many horrible

things that I really don't know *what* to think. And this particular Shadow-Walker already broke universal law by killing at least one human. So whatever this plan of yours is, I'd like to hear it."

Nancy nodded in understanding. "Alright, well..."

When she was finished speaking, the Doctor cleared his throat. "That could work. But you need extra help. I can't do it; I have to stay here and watch your brother and his friends. Rose is staying too. But I could get Amy and Rory to go with you."

Nancy shrugged. "Okay. Think they can handle it?" she asked.

He grinned back at her. "If you can, they *definitely* can," he replied. "I'll go get them." With that, he spun around and walked back into the gym.

Rose grinned as she heard him shouting, "Amy! Rory! I need your help over here!" She rolled her eyes, before giving Nancy and Jonathan a pointed look and sitting up against the wall next to them. "So much for subtlety, eh?"

Jonathan chuckled. "Yeah, so much for that." Suddenly, his manner turned serious. "Rose? I know I wasn't that nice to you when we first met, and...I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I didn't even stop to think about what you went through."

Rose smiled at him. "'S alright. I have heard *way* worse than what you said. But thank you. Apology accepted."

Nancy suddenly changed the subject when she sighed and rolled her eyes. "Where the hell is your boyfriend?" Jonathan stifled a laugh at that.

Rose gave Nancy a look. "How many times are you gonna insist that we're together when we are just friends?"

"As many times as it takes before you two realize you're being idiots. He likes you, alright? It's obvious. So just...kiss him or something, I don't know. Get your shit together," Nancy replied.

"Nancy!"

Before Nancy could say anything in response, the Doctor burst back into the gym, Amy and Rory behind him. "Okay, Ponds. You know what you've gotta do, right?"

Amy nodded. "Assist Nancy and Jonathan."

The Doctor looked at her expectantly. "And...?"

Rory answered this time. "Keep them from getting killed, obviously. And ourselves."

"Precisely! Now, Rose, will you come with me? I'd like to...talk to you."

Rose shared a brief glance with Nancy, who grinned and gave her a discreet thumbs-up. This caused her to roll her eyes before turning to the Doctor and nodding. "Alright."

She followed him back into the gym, where Mike was waiting for them. "Where the hell are Nancy and Jonathan?" he demanded.

Before the Doctor or Rose could answer, Dustin shouted from another room, "I *told* you, Mike, they're sucking face somewhere! The Doc and Rose probably are too!"

Mike turned around and yelled back, "The Doctor and Rose are right in front of me, you dumbass! And they heard what you said."

Rose couldn't help but giggle, and the Doctor rolled his eyes. Mike groaned. "Seriously, where are they?"

"Oh, they're with Amy and Rory trying to lure a vengeful Shadow-Walker out of its home dimension," the Doctor replied nonchalantly.

Mike's eyes went wide. "What the hell's a Shadow-Walker?"

The Doctor grinned at him. "Excellent question, Mike. A Shadow-Walker is a member of the alien species we are dealing with. That's its proper name."

Mike gave him a look of disbelief. "*That's* what it's called? *Really?* Demogorgon sounds better."

"Yes, I suppose so, but-"

"Doctor!" Rose snapped at him. "Conversation? You wanted to have one?"

"Oh, right! Yes." He clapped his hands together. "This way, come on." Rose rolled her eyes, muttered "men" under her breath, and followed the Doctor down a hallway.

They wound up in an empty classroom, with several round tables and bulletin boards plastered on the walls. The Doctor promptly sat down on one of said tables, earning a laugh from Rose.

"Really, Doctor? You're gonna sit *on* the table and not use a chair *like a normal person?*"

He grinned at her. "Yep! Normal is boring. Join me?"

Rose shrugged. "Can't argue with that," she replied, before sitting down on the table next to him. "So...what'd you want to talk about?"

"Eleven," he replied, without hesitation. "I've been thinking about what you said. You're right- she does need a place to stay. And I think that I would like it if she stayed with us."

"I knew it!" Rose teased, grinning at him. "I *knew* you'd come around. It's rather obvious that we are both quite fond of her," she said, laughing. "So...you want to adopt a twelve-year-old girl, then?"

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Not really the word I was thinking of, but...yeah, I suppose so. If that's what she wants. I think she might, but we'll have to ask her," he replied, smiling at Rose.

"Doctor, if you take in a child that's got nowhere to go and treat them as your own, you have *adopted* them. What word were *you* thinking of?" she asked him, curious.

"Oh, I dunno. I suppose that word never crossed my mind because of

all the...legal stuff...that's usually involved. That we would most likely *not* be doing."

Rose chuckled. "I suppose you have a point there." Suddenly her manner turned serious. "I can't help but worry about Eleven and Will. And Joyce, and Hopper...not to mention that poor girl Barbara." She sighed, wringing her hands. "This is crazy. Mental."

The Doctor took her hand in his and squeezed it comfortingly, while giving her a small smile. "That it is, my Rose," he murmured, not quite realizing what he had just said. "But we can deal with it together, yeah?"

Rose hadn't missed the endearment, but chose not to say anything about it. Instead, she simply smiled at him. "Together. Just as we should be," she murmured, echoing his words from a long, *long* time ago.

The Doctor and Rose Tyler; in the TARDIS. Just as it should be.

The Doctor also thought of the words she was recalling. He had been talking about something completely different then, but it was still a true statement. He belonged with Rose, he *needed* her.

Loved her.

Of course, he had always known that Rose would forever be someone very special to him. That she would always linger in the back of his mind. But he had almost forgotten just how much he needed her to be *with* him. And Rose's words reminded him of that fact.

Perhaps that's why, after a moment's pause; he leaned forward, put one hand on her cheek, and pressed his lips to hers.

Once Rose realized what was happening, she gladly returned the kiss, wrapping her arms around his neck. The Doctor seemed to take that as a good sign, for he slowly ran his hands through her hair and down her back, stopping at her waist. He tilted his head ever so slightly, though the kiss stayed gentle. She moved her fingers up into his hair and he sighed, never wanting to let go of her.

An instant later, though, he pulled away so that Rose could breathe. He kept his arms around her waist, and she leaned forward so that his forehead was pressed against hers. She breathed heavily through her nose, opening her mouth to speak.

Before Rose could say anything, however, the Doctor murmured softly, "Rose Marion Tyler, I love you. I'm in love with you."

She smiled at him. "And I'm in love with you." Rose paused for a moment before continuing, her smile becoming a huge grin. "You finally said it," she got out, before lapsing into giggling like a teenager.

The Doctor chuckled, a smile spreading over his own face. "Yes, I did. And it was long overdue," he murmured before leaning in to kiss her again, more firmly this time.

And a few moments into the kiss, they found themselves being interrupted.

"Aw, man, that's *disgusting!*"

They nearly jumped apart, startled. Lucas and Dustin were watching them, the former with a disgusted expression. The latter simply looked rather smug.

"Ignore him," Dustin said with a smirk. "He's just mad. Because he *now* owes me five bucks *and* a comic book." As he made that last statement, Dustin looked directly at Lucas.

"Y-You...you made a *bet?*" the Doctor stammered out. Rose lapsed into giggling again when she saw just how embarrassed the Doctor was.

Dustin chuckled. "It was my idea. I kept insisting that Rose wanted to make out with you. He was sure she didn't. So, I made a bet. Five bucks and a comic book if you either kissed or didn't kiss her. Obviously, I win."

Rose laughed. "Seriously? Well, I can't speak for the Doctor, but I for one am most definitely *amused*." She gave the Doctor a pointed look. "Which reminds me, you still owe me from our last bet-"

"-*Please* stop bringing that up, Rose."

Lucas groaned. "What I don't get is why you're *sucking face* when we could be *about to die*."

"No time like the present," Rose replied with a shrug.

Dustin glanced at the Doctor, taking note of the fact that his arms were still around Rose. "So, are you gonna let go of her, or..."

"Nope," the Doctor replied, grinning in Rose's direction.

She laughed and rolled her eyes. "You old romantic," Rose said teasingly, a loving smile on her face.

Lucas gagged. "Ew, ew, ew. Keep your gross romance away from us," he nearly yelled at them. Dustin started wheezing with laughter, before grabbing Lucas and dragging him away.

"I really don't know what to say, so...good luck, I guess?" Dustin shouted as they ran down the hallway.

Once they were gone, the Doctor couldn't help but smile at Rose. "We were just caught by a couple of kids," he said with a chuckle.

Rose nodded, laughing in spite of everything. "Yes, we were. And the strange part is that I don't really care. I'm just glad I'm with you."

The Doctor rolled his eyes. "And you called *me* a romantic," he teased, still grinning at her.

"I was married to you- well, the human you- for several years, Doctor. I know for a fact that you're-"

"-Okay, okay, point taken. But we should probably get out of here. Before they start...assuming things."

Rose laughed and looked at him incredulously. "Like what?" she asked jokingly- she knew *perfectly* well what he meant.

He gave her a pointed yet slightly uncomfortable look."Like, well...I

don't know. Ummm..." he looked down at his shoes, then back up at her, an almost pained expression on his face. "Do I *really* have to say it, Rose?"

"I *dare* you to say it."

"No. Nope! Dare *not* accepted," he replied, shaking his head for emphasis.

Rose smiled and pulled further away, so that she was facing the doorway instead of him. She laid her head on his shoulder, mumbling, "I love you, you know."

He smiled warmly at her and kissed the top of her head. "Yes, I do know. And I love you. Now, we should *really* go back in there."

Rose nodded, smiling ever so slightly. "Okay."

When they stood back up, the Doctor looked her in the eye. "You ready for this? To save the world?"

"Always, Doctor," she replied, and took his hand.

(A/N: So...it finally happened. Are you guys happy? Also, I put a Star Trek reference in here again. Hint: it's something Rose says to the Doctor, although you may not get it if you haven't watched *Star Trek Beyond*. Anyway, stay tuned for more!
-Emma Wolfe)

16. Chapter 16

Chapter 16

Warning Words

(A/N: This chapter is short. But there is some development of the characters in this chapter and a good cutoff point, so...I hope that's okay? It's late and I wanted to put something out there, so enjoy this for now!)

"*Look, everything that happened here and everything that's gonna happen, we don't talk about. You want Will back? This place had nothing to do with it."*

Hopper's words still rang in Joyce's ears as they both made their way through this impossible other dimension- the kids called it the Upside Down, while the Doctor just called it a parallel universe. She couldn't help but worry about everyone else, stuck in the middle school gymnasium waiting for something to happen.

And then her eyes fell on the rubble before them- Will's fort, almost completely demolished. Joyce didn't even think, she just ran around blindly, calling out for Will.

Hopper walked much more slowly, shining his flashlight on the various bits of wood and other debris that lay scattered on the ground. When he took notice of the stuffed animal, guilt flooded him as he was reminded of Sarah.

He had sold out an innocent girl to save Joyce's son, one that was so very much like his daughter, except she had been a science experiment. And there was no way he could warn-

Suddenly, he remembered something the Doctor had given him, in the shed when they were grabbing the deicing salt. A communicator that was currently resting in his ear. "For an emergency", he had said.

Turning to Joyce, he shushed her and whispered, "Joyce, there's something I need to do. You have to trust me on this, okay?" She nodded.

Slowly, Hopper raised one hand to the side of his head, tapping his ear through the Hazmat suit. Joyce listened and watched as he said, "Doc? Can you hear me?" A moment's pause. "Okay, good. Listen, you need to get ready for some company. Otherwise, you're dead."

"Guys, guys! This is crazy! We can't just wait around," Mike shouted impatiently. His gaze briefly flitted to Eleven, who was still sitting on the bleachers with Rose and the Doctor next to her.

"Mike, in case you forgot, we're still fugitives. The bad men are still looking for us," Lucas argued.

"Yeah, and your sister's gone to fight the Demogorgon!" Dustin added.

"Shadow-Walker," the Doctor corrected in the background. Rose glared at him as if to say, "That isn't important right now."

"I don't *care*, Doc! If I wanna call it the Demogorgon, I'm gonna. *You* don't get a vote," Dustin shouted, before turning back to Mike and Lucas. "I still think we should stick to the plan."

Lucas nodded in agreement. "Exactly. We stay here, keep El out of sight, and keep her safe. That's the most important thing, remember? Besides, your sister's okay. She's with Jonathan and Amy and Rory."

Dustin nodded, adding, "Yeah, *and* she's kind of a badass now, so..." With a nonchalant shrug, Dustin spun around and started to walk away.

"Well, where are you going? You just said stick to the plan!" Mike called out after him.

"I am. I'm just gonna go get some chocolate pudding. I'm telling you, Lunch Lady Phyllis hoards that shit!" The Doctor and Rose fought back laughter at that, while El looked at them quizzically.

"Are you serious?!" Mike yelled at Dustin.

"El needs to be recharged!" Dustin replied, looking over his shoulder. Lucas finally sighed and trailed after him.

Once the door the two boys had walked through slammed shut, Eleven removed herself from Rose's embrace, standing up. Mike immediately walked over to her.

"You okay?"

She nodded, smiling slightly. Mike chuckled, then turned to look at the Doctor and Rose.

"I'm gonna take El to the cafeteria. That's where Lucas and Dustin went. Dustin was right- she needs to eat so she can feel better. Is that okay?"

They both nodded. "Tell us if anything happens," the Doctor replied. Mike nodded in understanding. "Okay. Sure. Come on, El."

As they walked out, Eleven took Mike's hand. When Rose noticed this, she smiled and turned to the Doctor.

"He really cares about her, doesn't he? I mean, they all do, but he's a bit more...attentive," she murmured.

The Doctor shrugged in response. "Yeah, I suppose so. She's lucky to have a friend like that."

Rose leaned her head on his shoulder once more. "Anyone would be. I'm still worried about them, though. Especially El. I know she's gonna come with us, but...what happens after that? She's never been to school; and there are a lot of things she doesn't understand. Plus there's the whole telekinesis thing."

The Doctor smiled at her. "We'll figure it out, Rose. We're clever; we can manage. I think she'll be just fine, what with someone like you taking care of her."

Rose laughed at that, while the Doctor put his arm around her. Suddenly, her facial expression changed. "Oh my God, I just realized something. We'd...well, if we raised her from here on out, we'd be like her *parents*. Or something. Blimey, that's weird. Not 'cos of her or

anything, just...us," she said, gesturing between them vaguely.

When he saw the look on her face, the Doctor had to laugh too. "You think so? Well, I'll tell you what. You could marry me, then maybe it wouldn't be so weird," he replied teasingly, though he was only half joking.

"Did you just *propose* to me?" Rose asked, mock surprise in her voice. After a moment's pause, she continued. "We are *really* making up for lost time, aren't we? I'll think about it," she said, grinning.

Before the Doctor could say anything in response, his communicator made a strange noise- static crackling. When he activated it, he could hear Hopper's voice.

"*Doc? Can you hear me?"*

"Yeah, Hopper, I can hear you. What-"

Rose looked at him, curious. "What's Hopper want?"

The Doctor didn't answer Rose's question, as Hopper had cut him off.

"*-Okay, good. Listen, you need to get ready for some company. Otherwise, you're dead."*

"What? Hopper, what's going on-"

"*I sold the kid out, Doc. It was a messed up thing to do, I know. But they promised they'd leave the boys alone and let us get Will out of here. We're in this damn other dimension right now. How the hell are these microphone things working? Anyway, you gotta get out of there. Not ahead of time, or they'll know somebody tipped you off. Just get ready to run for it. Okay? Over."*

The Doctor said nothing at first, silenced by shock. When he recovered, he turned to Rose and said slowly, "Hopper told the people at the lab where Eleven was...in exchange for getting the chance to find Will. He wanted to warn us. We need to run when they get here."

Rose just nodded, as she was at a loss for words.

Meanwhile, Dustin was yelling, "Mike! I found the chocolate pudding!"

"*Okay*!" Mike shouted in reply.

Mike then focused on Eleven. "Are you feeling any better?"

She shrugged in response, unsure of what to say; other than the question that was on her mind. "What's 'putting'?"

Mike gave her a half-smile and replied, "Oh, pudding. It's this chocolate goo you eat with a spoon." When he saw the slight look of disgust on her face, he added, "Don't worry. When this is all over, you won't have to keep eating junk food and leftovers like a dog anymore."

He paused, before asking her, "You *really* want to go with the Doctor, don't you?"

Eleven shrugged again, not wanting to admit it and risk upsetting him. Mike, however, just smiled. "Hey, it's okay. Don't tell him I said this, but...he's actually pretty cool. And, I mean, who *wouldn't* want to travel around with an alien in a spaceship that's also a time machine?"

When Eleven still said nothing and refused to meet his eye, Mike took her hand in his own, before saying softly, "It'll be fine, El. As long as you still visit us. If you go with them, I won't be mad. I promise."

El finally looked him in the eye and smiled. "Thank you."

Mike chuckled. "You're welcome. And...who knows, maybe the Doctor and Rose will let us go on a trip with them, too. They probably will; they're nice."

Eleven nodded, still smiling. "Yes."

Mike sighed, thinking about what Eleven staying with them would mean. "Y'know, they'd almost be like...your parents, or something. Rose, she'd be like your new mom, and the Doctor, well...I *guess* he would be like your dad. Amy and Rory, I dunno. My point is, they'll take care of you. So don't feel bad about wanting to go with them.

But I was thinking, maybe once all this is over and Will's back and you're not a secret anymore, we could, um...oh, never mind. It's stupid," he said, looking away from her.

"Mike?" Eleven turned her head, looking him in the eye.

"Yeah?"

"Friends don't lie," she replied, almost with a stern tone.

Mike sighed again, looking up slightly. "Well...I was thinking...I don't know...maybe we can go to the Snow Ball together."

"'Snow Ball'?" El repeated, confused.

"It's this cheesy school dance, where you go in the gym and dance to music and stuff. I've never been. Anyway, I don't even know if they'd let you go, at least not...with me."

"W...Why?"

Mike looked at his shoes, unsure of how to explain his opinion. "Well...you go to school dances with someone that, you know...someone that you...like. I dunno if they'd be happy if they found out I liked you...like that."

Eleven tilted her head, still confused. "Like a friend?"

"Not a friend, a...uh...someone like a..." Mike had no idea how to explain it- or his current feelings- to her. After a long pause, he thought to himself: *The Doctor's gonna kill me if he finds out about this. Ah, screw it.*

Deciding he was out of options, Mike leaned forward and briefly pressed his lips to hers- almost an unwitting echo of the Doctor and Rose about an hour before. Only this time, neither of them really knew what they were doing.

Mike pulled away just as quickly as he had leaned in. Eleven said nothing, her eyes wide in surprise. But when she smiled at him, Mike smiled right back.

Before he could say anything, he was distracted by the sound of a car approaching. "Nancy. Hold on, I'll be right back. Stay here."

Though he did not see it, Eleven watched Mike leave.

The Doctor also heard the sound of the approaching car, and walked out of the gymnasium doors about the same time Mike walked outside. And instead of seeing his companions, Nancy, and Jonathan, the Doctor saw what could be called the "cavalry" coming to them. He made eye contact with Mike for an instant, before turning around and running back inside the gym.

"Rose!" he yelled. "Hopper was right- we've got company!"

"Shit," she swore, before jumping to her feet. "There's a door this way, come on."

Hand in hand, the Doctor and Rose ran for their lives.

(A/N: Sorry about the length once again, I wanted to finish this today and I'm tired. So I'm off to bed now, I guess. Hope you liked it; and I'll update sooner if I can to make up for the length. Also, the Doctor did technically just ask Rose to marry him, but whether or not he'll bring it up again is debatable. He said it on a whim and half-joking, after all.)

17. Chapter 17

Chapter 17

Running From Darkness

(A/N: Don't say I didn't warn you- somebody drops the f-bomb in this chapter. Well, technically there's two instances of the f-word, but they're in the same sentence, so I kept it PG-13. I think. I dunno what the policy is on that word and movie ratings. But this isn't a movie, is it? So who cares, rating stays T.)

The Doctor and Rose burst into the classroom where Dustin and Lucas were in with Eleven, right as Dustin held up a container of chocolate pudding and said, "This will charge your battery right up, I'm telling you."

"Oi!" the Doctor got out just as Mike ran in. "We need to get out of here *now*. They found us."

All three boys nodded in agreement, while Eleven's eyes widened and her breathing grew rapid. The Doctor noticed this, and quickly walked over to her. He took her hand and murmured, "Everything will be alright. Just get behind me. Now, we need to go."

Without another word, they all started running.

As they ran down the nearby steps, Mike yelled, "How did they find us?"

Lucas spoke up, but the Doctor cut him off. "I don't know, but-"

"-They found us because Hopper told them where Eleven was in exchange for finding Will. He warned me; now let's get out of here and hide," he hissed.

Suddenly the doors to the school flew open, and several agents faced them. "Got 'em!" one of them yelled.

"Go, go, go, go, go!" Mike shouted, and everyone spun around on their heel and ran back in the other direction- but they were blocked there too, and were forced to turn down a hallway.

Before they knew it, they were blocked in every direction. Guns were pointed at them, and there was nowhere else to go. They were trapped.

Ordinarily, the Doctor would have tried to talk his way out of such a situation, but before he could, Eleven took matters into her own hands.

The flashlights the agents were holding began to flicker, and dark liquid began to seep from their eyes- blood. The Doctor looked on in horror as he realized what was happening, but was still grateful that Eleven was trying to save them in the only way she could think of.

After a long, tense moment, all the agents collapsed to the ground- dead. Half a heartbeat later, Eleven also collapsed.

Mike rushed to her side before anyone else could. "El! El, are you okay?" He shook her shoulder, but she did not respond. "El!"

The Doctor quickly knelt down beside her. "She's out of energy," he murmured. "Don't worry, she's breathing."

"But she won't wake up! El? *El!*" Mike shouted, still trying to wake her.

"Mike, we have to go," Rose said, her voice desperate.

Suddenly, a new voice spoke up- Dr. Brenner. "Leave her!" he shouted, walking closer. "Step away from the child."

The Doctor stepped in front of Eleven then. "Oh, no. No, no, no. Don't you *dare* touch her!" he nearly snarled at the man.

Mike stood next to the Doctor and shouted, "Yeah! You want her? You have to kill us first!"

Dustin and Lucas added, "That's right!" and "*Eat shit!*", respectively.

Suddenly, agents ambushed all of them. The Doctor, Rose, and the boys all yelled and struggled against their captors' grasp.

They all continued to yell threats as Brenner sat Eleven up and murmured, "Eleven? Eleven, can you hear me?"

"Leave her alone, you son of a bitch!" the Doctor yelled, which surprised everyone- he never swore.

Eleven suddenly groaned, "Papa?"

Brenner smiled- a sick, twisted smile. "Yes. Yes, it's your papa. I'm here now."

Mike suddenly screamed, "Let her go! *Let her go, you bastard!*"

Eleven turned her head to look at them, her eyes full of pain and slight fear. She began to move her head around, whimpering.

"Shh, shh, you're sick," Brenner quieted her. The Doctor continued to fight against his captor, eyes blazing with anger. He wasn't going to get away with her. Not this time.

Brenner continued to speak to Eleven, ignoring everyone else. "You're sick, but I'm going to make you better. I'm going to take you back home, where I can make you well again. Where we can make all of this better; so no one else gets hurt."

Rose suddenly yelled at Brenner, "Fuck you and your *fucking lab!*" Dustin raised an eyebrow, clearly impressed by Rose's colorful language skills.

Eleven suddenly croaked out, "Bad. Bad." She turned away from Brenner- the man who called himself her *father*- and reached out to them. "Mike. Mike! Doctor...help."

And then, time seemed to freeze as the electricity in the building jolted. The lights flickered on and off for several moments.

"Blood," Mike said suddenly. "What?" Lucas gasped out in response.

Mike just repeated the last word. "Blood!"

The Doctor seemed to realize what Mike was getting at. "Oh, no...it's here."

His fear was confirmed when a loud thud echoed throughout the room- the Shadow-Walker was trying to break through the wall. The Doctor could only stand there as it tore down the barrier like a battering ram, screeching.

"Demogorgon," Dustin exclaimed.

When it emerged fully, it roared in what was probably fear or anger. The agents released the boys, the Doctor, and Rose, in favor of firing machine guns at the Shadow-Walker.

Before the Doctor could run away, however, the creature fixed whatever sort of gaze it had on him. Everyone- but especially the agents- got quite a shock when the Shadow-Walker *spoke*.

"Time Lord," the beast snarled, its words coming out in a snakelike hiss.

"Go, go, go!" Mike screamed, prompting everyone to run. Mike tried to lift Eleven, but couldn't quite manage her weight.

"It's okay; I've got her," the Doctor said quickly, scooping her up.

Not for the first time that day, they all ran like their lives depended on it.

Even as they fled, the Doctor could hear the sound of gunfire, the Shadow-Walker's screeches of pain, and what sounded like Brenner being...pounced on. He made a noise close to screaming, anyway. *Terrible way to die*, the Doctor mused. *Ah well, better that than Eleven having to go back with him*.

As they made their way to the nearest classroom, the Doctor murmured to Eleven, "Hold on. We're almost there. You'll be okay."

She said nothing in response, exhausted.

The lights continued to flicker as the Doctor and Rose walked to the

back of the classroom and set Eleven down gently on the table. Eleven reached for the Doctor's hand, but kept her eyes on Mike as he practically ran over to her.

Mike murmured to Eleven, "Just...hold on a little longer, okay?" He sniffed, trying to think of a way to comfort her. "He's gone. The bad man's gone."

The Doctor nodded in agreement. "Yes. He can't hurt you anymore. No one will ever hurt you again; do you understand?" he said softly, his own voice in danger of breaking.

Rose put her own hand on top of Eleven's as well, trying very hard not to cry out of sympathy and concern for her. "You'll be alright, love. We're going to take care of you."

Mike nodded, his voice shaking slightly. "You'll be home soon, and get to go on adventures and have fun...I mean, you'll get to go to outer space. And back in time. And I'm sure you'll get to eat as many Eggos as you want." For the first time in a while, El smiled at him.

That was when the dam broke- tears filled Mike's eyes and he lost control of his voice. "And...maybe we can go to school together, and hang out on the weekends. We'll get to have fun, and not worry about this stuff anymore."

El's smile only brightened. She whispered softly, "Promise?"

"Promise," Mike replied, his voice growing steady again.

The Doctor tightened his grip on Eleven's hand. "You're safe with us," he whispered, smiling ever so slightly. "Just hold on for a little while, and then you can come home with-"

Anything else the Doctor would have said was cut off by the Shadow-Walker's horrible scream- it was in pain. Mike also screamed as the sound of gunfire grew nearer, as well as sick thudding noises. The Doctor knew that sound for what it was- dead bodies collapsing. A few moments later, the gunfire ceased.

Now's...probably a good time to panic, the Doctor thought to himself, though he didn't voice it.

"I-Is it..is it dead?" Dustin stammered.

That question was answered in the most terrifying way possible- the Shadow-Walker knocked the door down flat.

In a moment of blind instinct, the Doctor jumped directly into its pathway, causing Dustin to scream.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa! Stop! *Please*. You can understand me, and I can understand you. So could we maybe talk this out?!"

"Hello, *Doctor*," the beast replied, its tone anything but friendly. "I believe your friends tried to kill me."

(A/N: This chapter is also short, but with a lot more action. So hopefully that makes up for it. I didn't want to cram all of The Upside Down episode into one chapter.)

18. Chapter 18

Chapter 18

Shadows and Sacrifices

(A/N: These last few chapters are short because I need a good point to start the epilogue at. So I hope you like it despite the length.)

The Doctor stood very still as the Shadow-Walker entered the room, drawing itself up to its full height. The lights flickered even more rapidly as it did so. The children breathed heavily in panic while Rose simply watched, wide-eyed. The Doctor stepped in front of all of them, intending to protect them if something went wrong.

The Shadow-Walker spoke up first. "Would you like to explain why your *friends* tried to murder me?"

The Doctor clapped his hands together, indicating that he was about to launch into a long explanation. "Well, you see...they were protecting themselves. You've been running around kidnapping and killing humans, which is *against universal law*, mind you. When humans disappear for no reason, other humans become fearful- and when humans are afraid, they attack. Probably one of the reasons why they've survived for so long, but that's not the point. This is: they tried to kill you because you've been killing their own kind. Have you anything to say for yourself on that note?"

"Yes. Your people hunted mine down. We were forced to live in the shadows of reality. And when the Time War raged, my people were dying just as yours did, and the Time Lords did *nothing* to stop it! I, like you, am the last of my species. Only, *I* starve while you live a...comfortable life. I hunted here out of necessity," the Shadow-Walker grumbled.

The Doctor sighed in frustration and rolled his eyes. "No, don't give me that! You know as well as I that the Time Lords vowed to never

interfere with the universe- only watch. Why do you think I was considered a renegade? And besides, you could have hunted animals, or scavenged. You broke universal law by slaughtering humans. Why did you do it?"

The beast said nothing in reply, only snarled softly.

The Doctor thought for a moment, realization dawning on his face. "I think I know why. You're angry- you want to harm advanced species, because they live easy lives while you have to struggle to survive. I suppose I can understand that- you have the intelligence of an advanced creature but have to live like a common animal. That *would* get frustrating. But that's no excuse to needlessly kill innocent-"

"-It was a reward for following orders, you idiot!" the Shadow-Walker roared.

When the Doctor said nothing in reply, it continued. "Yes, I started stalking humans out of anger. But I was a terrible hunter- could barely even catch food for myself that was non-human." It paused, taking a breath.

"And then I met my master. In exchange for following him, he provides me with whatever I need or want. He is...powerful. *Very* powerful. Much more so than you, Time Lord! He will either wipe out or control all races, for he is far superior to everything- even the Daleks! So do not lecture me. I will continue to serve my master, and he *will* take control of the universe. It will not be difficult for him, either- once I get rid of *you*, that is."

Without another word, the Shadow-Walker roared and raised its clawed hand, intending to deal a lethal blow. Rose screamed when she realized what was happening. The Doctor yelled and tried to step back, but knew he wouldn't be able to get away in time…

Suddenly, the Shadow-Walker was thrown backwards, its body slamming into the blackboard. It shrieked yet again- something had hurt it. That was when the Doctor had a realization- Eleven.

Sure enough, she had stepped down from the table and walked past

the boys. When Mike saw what she was doing, he shouted, "Eleven, stop!" He ran up to her, but was flung back into the cabinet before he could do anything.

The Doctor drew in a horrified breath as El kept walking past him; towards the Shadow-Walker. "Eleven, please don't. You could *kill yourself!*" he yelled, his voice rising in fear. When she ignored him, he tried to move closer to her.

Rather than being knocked over the way Mike had been, the Doctor suddenly found himself unable to move- as if he had frozen. The Shadow-Walker continued to screech in pain as Eleven turned around to face the Doctor.

That was when she did something very strange. Like she had many times before, Eleven took the Doctor's hand. He immediately knew why she did so when he felt her mind in the back of his.

She sent him a mental message, one that made the Doctor desperately want to break free of whatever was restraining him and keep Eleven from doing this very dangerous thing. And yet, it was only two words. Two simple words that broke him almost as much as "Bad Wolf" did.

I'm sorry.

With that, she released his hand and focused on the Shadow-Walker once more. And though Eleven did not see it, a single tear fell from the Doctor's eye.

Eleven continued to walk closer to the Shadow-Walker, and its enraged screeching turned to squeals of pain. Blood trickled from her nose and ears as she turned to look at her friends- and new family- one last time.

Everyone stood frozen in both grief and horror as Eleven whispered, "Goodbye, Mike. Goodbye, Doctor."

She then closed her eyes, trying not to think about seeing Mike crying or the look of sheer guilt on the Doctor's face. She turned her head to focus on the Shadow-Walker, blocking out Rose's sobs.

Opening her eyes, she told the beast, "No more."

With that, she stretched out her hand, using her mind to kill the creature. Its screams grew loud enough that Mike, Dustin, and Lucas all exclaimed and covered their ears.

The Doctor could only stand there, as Eleven's hold on him had not lessened. He breathed shakily as the Shadow-Walker continued to scream, reaching for her with its terrible clawed hand. And when Eleven also began to cry out, the Doctor felt something inside of him break completely.

She saved me. She saved me, and now she's-

He didn't want to think about the fact that she could very well be...*dying*. But his pain did help the Doctor accept something he had dismissed the notion of at first. He cared for Eleven as if...as if she was his own daughter. And if he actually thought about it, he realized he'd definitely come to think of her that way; without really meaning to.

The screams of both Eleven and the Shadow-Walker grew louder, a white sort of glow appearing in the latter's chest. She was *tearing the Shadow-Walker apart.*

Within a few moments, it had dissolved into thick dust that enveloped its killer. The Doctor closed his eyes tightly, not daring to look. The screams of the Shadow-Walker echoed for a heartbeat, then died out completely.

When the Doctor realized that he was able to move around again, he opened his eyes very slowly.

The lights had come back on, and remnants of the Shadow-Walker's body lay scattered on the ground like ashes. And Eleven was nowhere to be found.

"El?" the Doctor called out. He repeated her name, louder. "Eleven! Where are you?"

Mike, Dustin, and Lucas were also calling out for her, while Rose had

simply gone pale and silent from shock. Not thinking, the Doctor ran to her, pulling her into an embrace.

"Rose," he choked out, while she simply sobbed, burying her face in his shoulder. "Rose, I'm so sorry."

They both tried to block out the boys' desperate yells for Eleven. But after a moment, Mike broke down crying, which caused the Doctor and Rose to focus on him.

"She's gone," he whimpered. "She's just...gone."

Immediately Rose hugged him, before giving way to tears again herself.

Although none of them wanted to accept it, Mike was right- Eleven was indeed gone.

(A/N: Action turns into angst. I'm so very sorry. There's just the epilogue after this, or maybe one more chapter then the epilogue. We'll see. But I hope you liked it even if I made you sad- I cried a little bit. Let me know what you thought in a review.)

19. Chapter 19

Chapter 19

Hellos and Goodbyes

(A/N: This is the last chapter with the exception of the epilogue, which I am currently in the process of writing. Might be out today, but definitely will be out tomorrow.)

It was very, very quiet at Joyce's house. Amy and Rory sat on the couch, while everyone else stood up, looking morose. The Doctor had told Amy, Rory, Nancy, and Jonathan what had happened in the school- the Shadow-Walker was dead, and Eleven was...gone.

Nancy walked over to the Doctor and Rose. "I'm really sorry," she said, wanting to comfort them somehow. "Eleven...seemed like a really sweet girl. And I know she meant a lot to you."

Rose smiled a very sad smile and leaned her head on the Doctor's shoulder. "Yeah. She did. I mean, we were fully prepared to...to take her in, so to speak," Rose murmured, sniffling. The Doctor pressed a kiss to the top of her head at that. "It'll be alright, love," he whispered.

When Nancy saw that display of affection, she tilted her head in confusion. "Now is like...the worst time to ask this, but..."

The Doctor shrugged when she didn't finish her sentence. "Just ask," he murmured. "I could use a distraction, anyway."

"Are you guys...together, now?" Nancy asked him haltingly. "I was just wondering."

The Doctor nodded silently in response. "Pretty much, yeah."

Suddenly, the Doctor's communicator made a crackling noise again, before a voice came through- Hopper.

"*Well, I've got some good news, if that's even possible. We found Will, Doc."*

The Doctor's eyes widened. "You found him? Is he alright?"

Rose turned to look at him, interested. "Is that about Will? Did they find-"

The Doctor held up his hand in a request for silence- Hopper was explaining to him what happened.

"*Well, he was clinically dead when we found him, but...we were able to revive him. So yeah, he's okay. Oh, and, uh...tell Rose that she most likely kept him alive- we may not have been able to revive him if she hadn't been with him for a while. See, the atmosphere in there is toxic. My theory is that Rose somehow shielded him from it when she was there. But he'll be fine. Joyce is on the ambulance with him right now- they're taking him to the local hospital. You might wanna get everyone with you and come down there. Over."*

After Hopper disconnected from the communicator, the Doctor knew he had a lot of explaining to do.

Rose sat with the Doctor inside the hospital waiting room, his hand in hers. Joyce and Jonathan were already in the room with Will, but Hopper, Nancy, and Will's friends as well as Amy and Rory were sitting here, waiting for Will to wake up.

Mike's parents were also there, his mother eyeing the Doctor and Rose curiously while his father was out cold. Sitting next to them was a teenager they didn't recognize, who had significant injuries to his face. The Doctor thought about asking what happened to him, but decided against it.

Hopper smirked ever so slightly when he saw the Doctor and Rose holding hands. "So are you two still in denial, or..."

The Doctor glared at him- a real glare. "We're together now. I'm assuming that's what you wanted to know," he snapped. "I don't feel like talking right now."

Rose gave him a sympathetic look. "Doctor...there was nothing you could have done to keep her from-"

He met her gaze, his eyes full of pain. "I could have tried harder. I *should* have. It's my fault she's..." he sighed. He didn't want to say the word "dead", because that just made it all real. And a small part of him refused to believe that she was actually gone- a tiny ray of hope.

Hopper's manner suddenly changed, his tone of voice going from gruff to quiet. "Hey, Doc? Can I talk to you for a second- it's important. Outside?"

The Doctor nodded hesitantly, before getting up and following Hopper outside of the hospital building.

Once they reached the sidewalk, Hopper sighed. "Look, I know you said you didn't feel like talking, so you don't have to. Just...listen, alright?"

Hopper didn't wait for a response before continuing. "I don't even know why I'm telling you this, but...I know how you feel right now. I...had a daughter, Doc. Her name was Sarah. She got cancer, and...I had to watch her die, too. I know what it's like...that helpless feeling. The guilt that comes with it. But it is true what they say, you know. Every day, it does get a little easier."

The Doctor shook his head. "I'm sorry about your daughter, Hopper. Truly. But..it doesn't get easier. Not for me, not really. I just...can't believe that she's gone. Yesterday she was perfectly fine, happy even. And now she's vanished off the face of the Earth. Literally."

Hopper nodded in understanding. "You don't think she's dead. And maybe she's not- I really don't know what to think. Which is another reason why I wanted to talk to you- to give you this." He handed the Doctor a piece of paper with a phone number scribbled messily on it. "The goons from Hawkins Lab are still looking for her, I'm sure. You find out *anything* about what happened to Eleven, you call me. Got it?"

The Doctor nodded, examining the scrap of paper. "I can do that.

And- here."

Reaching into his coat pocket, the Doctor grabbed hold of a blank piece of paper and a pen. He wrote something down on the paper before giving it to Hopper. "That is *my* phone number. Anything weird starts happening here again, let me know."

Hopper chuckled a bit. "Glad we have an understanding, Doc. I'm gonna stay out here- you can go back in."

The Doctor said nothing in reply, only turned around and went back inside.

By the time he got back to the waiting room, Dustin and Lucas were both snoring. Mike, however, was wide awake, looking down at the floor. The Doctor walked over to him.

"Hey, Mike. You okay?" he said softly.

Mike glared up at him. "Obviously not," he snapped.

His mother turned to face him. "Michael! Be nice. Sorry," she said, looking up at the Doctor. She then tilted her head, brow furrowing in curiosity. "Who are you? You look a little familiar."

"John Smith. *Doctor* John Smith. We...*might* have met; I'm not sure. I meet new people all the time."

She gave him a small smile. "Karen Wheeler. Nice to meet you...Doctor. Are you a new teacher at Mike's school, or..."

"No. My friends and I-" he gestured in the direction of Rose, Amy, and Rory- "helped Joyce and the police chief find Will. Met your son and his friends in the process, is all." He smiled politely at that, but didn't grin the way he normally would have.

"Oh, okay." Before Karen could ask the Doctor why he and his friends were waiting to see Will in the hospital, or why he had gone outside to talk with Hopper a few minutes before, Jonathan walked back into the waiting room.

As if on cue, Mike jumped to his feet and turned towards his friends. "Guys. Guys, he's up. Will's up!" With that, he shook them awake, causing them to groan in irritation. "Come on, let's go!" Mike shouted, running down the hallway.

Jonathan laughed at that, turning around and following them as they ran into Will's hospital room. A moment later, Mike's ecstatic shout of "Byers!" could be heard.

Rose grinned, beckoning to the Doctor. "Come here for a minute, would you?"

The Doctor did as she asked of him, sitting down next to her. "Yes? D'you need something, Rose?"

Rose shook her head and took his hand in hers once more. "No, I'm just glad Will is alright."

They could hear Mike, Lucas, and Dustin talking to Will through the door, although they couldn't quite understand what was being said. They laughed to themselves and lapsed into easy conversation for the next few minutes, though the subject of a certain telekinetic girl still lingered in the back of their minds.

They were interrupted, however, when Jonathan walked back into the room, the boys trailing behind him. "Rose? Will wants to see you guys."

She and the Doctor shared a look, but got up and walked into his room after a moment.

Once Will caught sight of them, he shouted, "Rose! Oh my God, I thought you were dead."

Rose grinned and quickly stepped closer to him, crouching down beside the hospital bed. "No, 'm alive, buddy. I missed you, though. I really did," she murmured, before ruffling his hair affectionately and kissing the top of his head.

"Rose! Come on. You're worse than Mom," Will protested, swatting her hand away. He then focused his gaze on the Doctor, who had

remained in the doorway with Jonathan. "Hi. You can...come over here, if you want."

When the Doctor did so, he crouched down next to Rose. Will grinned when he saw him, before saying, "So...you must be the Doctor. Nice to finally meet you."

This made the Doctor grin for the first time since Eleven had disappeared. "As a matter of fact, you are correct. I *am* the Doctor. And it's nice to finally meet *you*, Will Byers."

Will rolled his eyes. "Ugh, now you just sound like Rose- no offense," he said, quickly glancing at the blonde woman. "Just don't use my last name, okay?"

The Doctor shrugged nonchalantly. "Alright, I won't. But all kidding aside, are you feeling okay?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine."

"Good. Now, I have something for you and your mum here- and for your friends too." He reached into his pocket and handed something to Joyce. "If any of you ever get in trouble again, call that number. Okay?"

Joyce looked at the number written on the paper and tilted her head, confused. "Is that...your..."

He nodded. "Yep! Can never be too careful with strange occurrences- if it happens once, more often than not it'll happen again. I'm not necessarily referring to being *taken* to another dimension, but...the dimension itself still exists. So, we need to be on the lookout. Probably not what you want to hear right now, I'm just preparing you. So if something ever happens again- even if you just *think* something is happening- call me and tell me."

Joyce nodded in understanding, smiling. "Do you always do this?" she asked him, sniffling slightly.

He nodded. "Well, not always, but...often. I want people to be able to call me if they need my help."

Rose smiled, taking his hand. "Like a doctor."

"Yes, Rose. Exactly like a doctor."

Will noticed their odd behavior, and raised an eyebrow at them. Gesturing between them with his hand, he said, "So...what's the deal with you guys? Are you two...you know..."

Rose nodded. "Yeah, pretty much." Even Joyce raised an eyebrow at that, though Will was the one who spoke next.

"Well, when did *that* happen?"

"I don't see how that's any of your business, *William*," Rose replied teasingly, grinning.

He groaned. "Ugh, don't call me *that* either! But- okay, okay. It's none of my business, I get that. But hey, I'm glad that you got what you wanted. And I just wanna know: did you kiss *him* first, or did he kiss *you*? Who started it?"

"Him. He kissed me," Rose said in response, looking in the Doctor's direction. "Took you long enough, mind."

"Oh, um...that...I'm sorry?" the Doctor stammered out.

Rose lapsed into giggling. "Oh my God...you are funny. Very funny indeed. Don't worry, I won't hold it against you- you can just marry me, then we'll call it even."

Will's eyes popped out of his head. "She just asked you to *marry* her, man."

"That she did. But that evens the score a little bit, considering that I did the same to her a few hours ago."

Joyce started laughing at that. "So are you getting married or not? Make up your mind."

"Ah, I'm sure we will eventually. Need to work out a few things first, though," the Doctor replied.

He cleared his throat, then continued. "On another note, it was quite an adventure meeting you all. But I think it's time for Rose and I to leave. Well, with Amy and Rory of course, but you get my point."

"Y-You're leaving?" Will stammered. "But, but...I just met you!"

"And I'm sure we'll meet again, Will. But for now, this is...well, it's not really goodbye. Just 'until next time'. Understand?"

Will nodded. "See you soon, I hope. You too, Rose- I really liked spending time with you, even if we were in an evil dimension." In spite of everything, Rose had to laugh at that.

Joyce smiled and hugged Rose and the Doctor in turn. "Thank you, both of you. Rose, you kept my son alive. And Doctor, you...you believed me when no one else did. I can't tell you how much that means to me."

They couldn't think of much to say, so the Doctor and Rose simply replied with, "You're welcome."

(A/N: Only the epilogue to go! Whew, this was a rollercoaster. Of emotions and plot twists. Both for me and for the reader- writer's block is so frustrating. I lost count of the times I just...sat there, mentally screaming obscenities at my laptop. But when inspiration hit me, it was amazing. Love to all my readers, and I hope you loved this.)

20. Chapter 20

Chapter 20

Epilogue- Finding Home

Once all the goodbyes and thank yous had been said, and phone numbers given out- the Doctor wanted there to be multiple copies of his phone number around in case of an emergency- the Doctor, Rose, and their companions set off for the TARDIS.

Within a minute, the TARDIS was back in the Vortex, which prompted Amy to say something to the Doctor.

"Look, it was my request that led to all of this. Finding a missing kid, rescuing another one- I know how that turned out, don't look at me like that; but we kept her safe, at least for a while- and...you found Rose again. I know how much you love her, Doctor. Anyone could see that. So, I'd like to make another request."

The Doctor let out a tired sigh. "Alright, Pond, what is it?"

She smiled. "Take me and Rory home, please? Not forever, just for a little while. We need to relax for a little bit and maybe *not* run for our lives for a few days?"

The Doctor chuckled. "Ordinarily, I'd try and talk you out of it, but...I think I need a break, too. To clear my head. A lot happened, and...I want to rest for a bit."

Amy nodded in understanding. "Well, that's settled, then."

Rose sat with the Doctor in the TARDIS library, resting on a couch. Neither of them spoke for a long while, as the events of the last few days had finally drained them of their energy.

When the Doctor did finally bring himself to speak, he simply murmured to Rose, "I'm going to go check on the console, see if any repairs need to be done." She nodded silently in response, leaning up

against the armrest. Before long, Rose was falling asleep.

She was awakened rather abruptly when the whole room shook violently. Standing up, Rose ran into the console room.

"Doctor, wha's goin' on?" she exclaimed, having taken note of the fact that the Doctor was frantically pressing buttons and pulling levers- and from what she knew about flying the TARDIS, he was trying to get her to stop.

"I don't know, Rose! She just took off on her own! I'm trying to stop it, but...she's really fighting me on this."

Rose sighed, grabbing onto a support to keep herself from falling down. "Maybe 's important. Why don't you let her take us where she's trying to go?"

The Doctor smiled at her. "I never would have thought of that. You, Rose Tyler, are *brilliant*," he said emphatically, before walking over to her and pressing a brief kiss to her lips.

She smiled back at him when he pulled away, wrapping her arms around his neck. "That's what they tell me."

Suddenly, the room shook again, nearly knocking them both over. Rose started to laugh at that, but stopped when she saw the look on the Doctor's face.

"Doctor? Are you alright? What's wrong?"

He sighed, before handing Rose a newspaper clipping from his pocket- the same one that Hopper had shown them.

"Terry Ives believed her daughter to be alive for twelve years. And everyone thought she was mad. But...she had been right. And now I can't stop thinking about the fact that Eleven- or Jane, depending- anyway, that her mother will never get to know what happened to her," he concluded with a sigh.

Rose gave the newspaper clipping back to the Doctor before pulling him into a hug. "That isn't your fault. If you're going to blame someone, blame that crazy Shadow-Walker thing. Or Brenner, for

keeping Eleven locked up. Don't blame yourself," she murmured.

"Easier said than done, Rose," he replied, his breathing ragged, as if he was close to crying. "Easier said than done."

A loud thump echoing throughout the room indicated that the TARDIS had landed. Slowly, the Doctor moved away from Rose, and went to check the computer screen on the console.

Rose tilted her head in curiosity when she saw the Doctor's eyes widen in shock. "So, where and when are we?"

He replied haltingly, "December twenty-fifth, 1983...Hawkins, Indiana."

She sighed. "Maybe something...happened, then. We should take a look. See what we find."

The Doctor nodded slowly, not quite sure of what to say or do. "Alright. We'd best get a move on, then."

With that, they headed outside of the TARDIS.

Upon taking a look outside, they realized that they were in the woods; only the woods happened to be covered in snow this time around. Rose shivered and ran her hands over her shoulders. "Really hating this bloody dress right about now. I didn't think to change."

The Doctor gave her a half-smile. "Well, I won't have you freeze to death. Here." Before Rose was able to say anything in response, the Doctor had removed his jacket and laid it across her shoulders. "Not the best...winter coat, but it'll help."

Rose nodded, grinning. "No point in trying to give it back to you, is there?"

He shook his head, returning her grin. "Nope! Not gonna work."

Suddenly, all the levity disappeared when the Doctor noticed tracks in the snow. "Look here, Rose. Footprints. They look like they belong to a kid."

Rose's eyes widened. "You don't think..."

"I don't know, Rose. Let's have a look," he said quickly, before starting to follow the trail. "Come on."

The path of footprints continued for quite a while- several hundred, at least. Due to low visibility, it took over an hour for them to find anything. When they did, it was quite a shock to them.

Rose was the first one to hear footsteps, and set off in the direction of the sound. The Doctor was right behind her when she made a startling discovery.

A young child, wearing a red hunter's coat and hat. With a very short haircut. Wearing jeans, too, by the looks of it. Unable to stop herself, Rose called out, "Eleven?"

The child spun around so fast that she nearly fell over. Immediately, the Doctor and Rose both ran towards her, nearly shouting out of relief.

When Eleven realized what was happening, she smiled and began running to them, too. "Doctor!" she called out, before stopping just in front of him. Immediately, he bent down and wrapped his arms around her, hugging her tightly. Rose also put an arm around her, patting her on the back.

Before either of them could say anything to Eleven, she started sobbing. "I'm sorry," she got out.

"No, no. Don't apologize, love. You were very brave, and you saved my life," the Doctor murmured to her. "You saved a lot of lives."

Rose nodded in agreement, tears falling from her eyes. "You don't need to be sorry, sweetheart. It's alright."

Eleven said nothing in reply, only sobbed harder and embraced them both.

After a minute, the Doctor pulled away from her and put one hand on her cheek. "Eleven, are you...are you ready to come home with us?"

She nodded, whispering, "Home."

Inside the TARDIS, Eleven was currently in her new bedroom- she had taken a bath and eaten dinner before going straight to sleep. The Doctor had just remembered what Hopper told him- if he found out anything about Eleven, call his phone number.

"Rose?" the Doctor whispered softly. "I'm gonna call Hopper. He told me to let him know if we found out anything about Eleven. Be right back."

With that, he went into the console room, where the phone was mounted on the wall. He looked back at the number Hopper had given him, before dialing it.

"Come on, pick up…" he grumbled.

After several rings, the police chief's voice could be heard on the other end of the line. *"Hopper."*

"Hello. It's-"

"*Hey, Doc. I know that's you, I don't know anybody else who's British. It's been a month, man. How the hell did you find out something so quickly?"* That was when the Doctor decided it would be best to not tell Hopper it had only been a few hours for him.

"I found her, Hopper. In the woods. She's with me now. Sleeping, I think. I'm not sure."

"*You...*what*? Oh, thank God. Now, I need you to listen to me* very *carefully, Doc. The lab is being run by someone new- a Doctor Sam Owens. Bunch of other people too, but I dunno their names. Now, far as I can tell, he has no idea that Eleven even exists. But I know for a fact that there's agents who are still looking for her, on orders from God knows who. You* cannot *bring her back here. It's too dangerous for people to see her in Hawkins- there's spies everywhere. Cameras, microphones,* people- *you get the idea. I need you to keep her with you, and* do not *try to contact anyone else besides me. She needs to be a well-kept secret. Got it?"*

The Doctor nodded. "Yeah, I understand. But...what about all her

friends, and-"

"*They can't know."* A sigh could be heard on the other end. *"I hate to do that to them, Doc, I really do; but that's how it's gotta be. I mean, you could maybe leave them a note or something, but...I wouldn't risk it if I were you. She can't be seen in Hawkins, and they can't see her."*

The Doctor let out a sigh then, too. "Okay, but...remember that I'm the one who'll have to explain that to her in the morning. Just so you're aware."

"*Ah, you can handle it, Doc,"* Hopper replied good-naturedly. *"She's practically your kid already."* Another pause. *"Take care, alright? Of yourself and her. Try not to get yourself killed, either. I got the impression you have a habit of doing that."*

The Doctor rolled his eyes. "Okay, fine. I will. See you."

"Alright, bye."

With that, he hung up the phone. *Time to work out an explanation,* he thought to himself. And then he had another idea. Unbeknownst to him, though, it wouldn't go quite the way he expected.

On the morning of December 26th, 1983, Mike Wheeler woke up and found a note left in El's blanket fort- something he didn't want to look at- for him. Picking it up, he read the name on the front.

The Doctor

In anger, Mike crumpled up the note and threw it away. He didn't want to see an apology, or any kind of explanation for what happened to El. He couldn't.

But as a result of his actions, he would never see the words written on the other side of the note, and would go on believing that she was gone, probably never to be seen again. It, like many other messages they had all seen, was two simple words.

She's alive.

(A/N: In the words of Amelia Pond: "Here we are, old friend. You and me. On the last page." A lot of blood, sweat, tears, and yelling in frustration went into this. But seeing it written out makes it all worth it. So, I have one final thing to tell you: in true Stranger Things fashion, there will be a sequel. It will cover the events of Season 2. And yes, Eleven is living with the Doctor and Rose now, rather than Hopper. And I have something to ask you guys: What did you think of the name I gave the Demogorgon? Also, I need an alternative name for the Mind Flayer. I'm open to suggestions. Anyway, for the last time: Thanks and love go to all of my readers. See you on the next adventure.)

21. Author's Note: SEQUEL!

(A/N: The sequel is out! It's called Shadows From Another World. Hope you like it.)